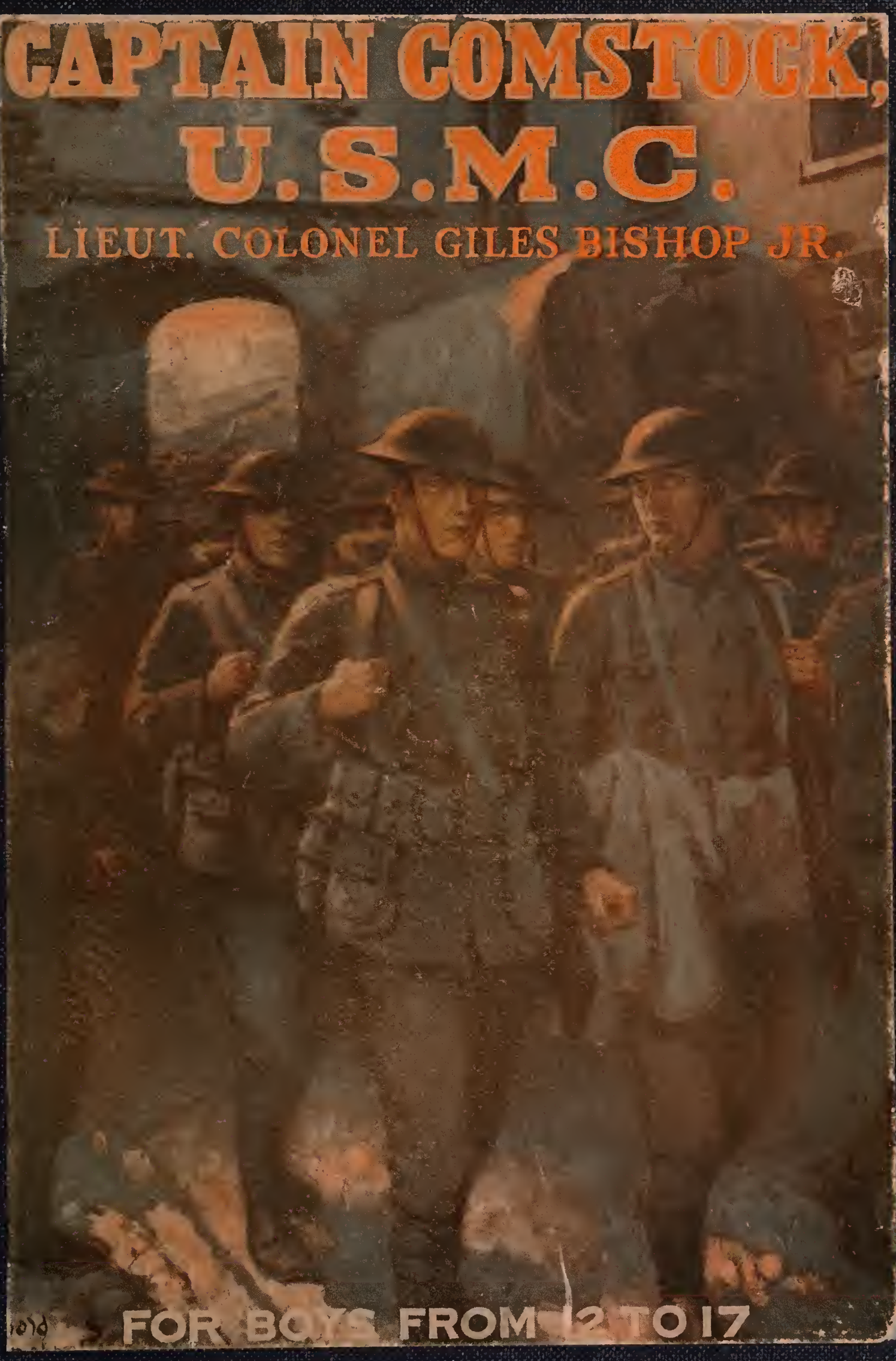
CAPTAIN COMSTOCK, U.S.M.C.

LIEUT. COLONEL GILES BISHOP JR.



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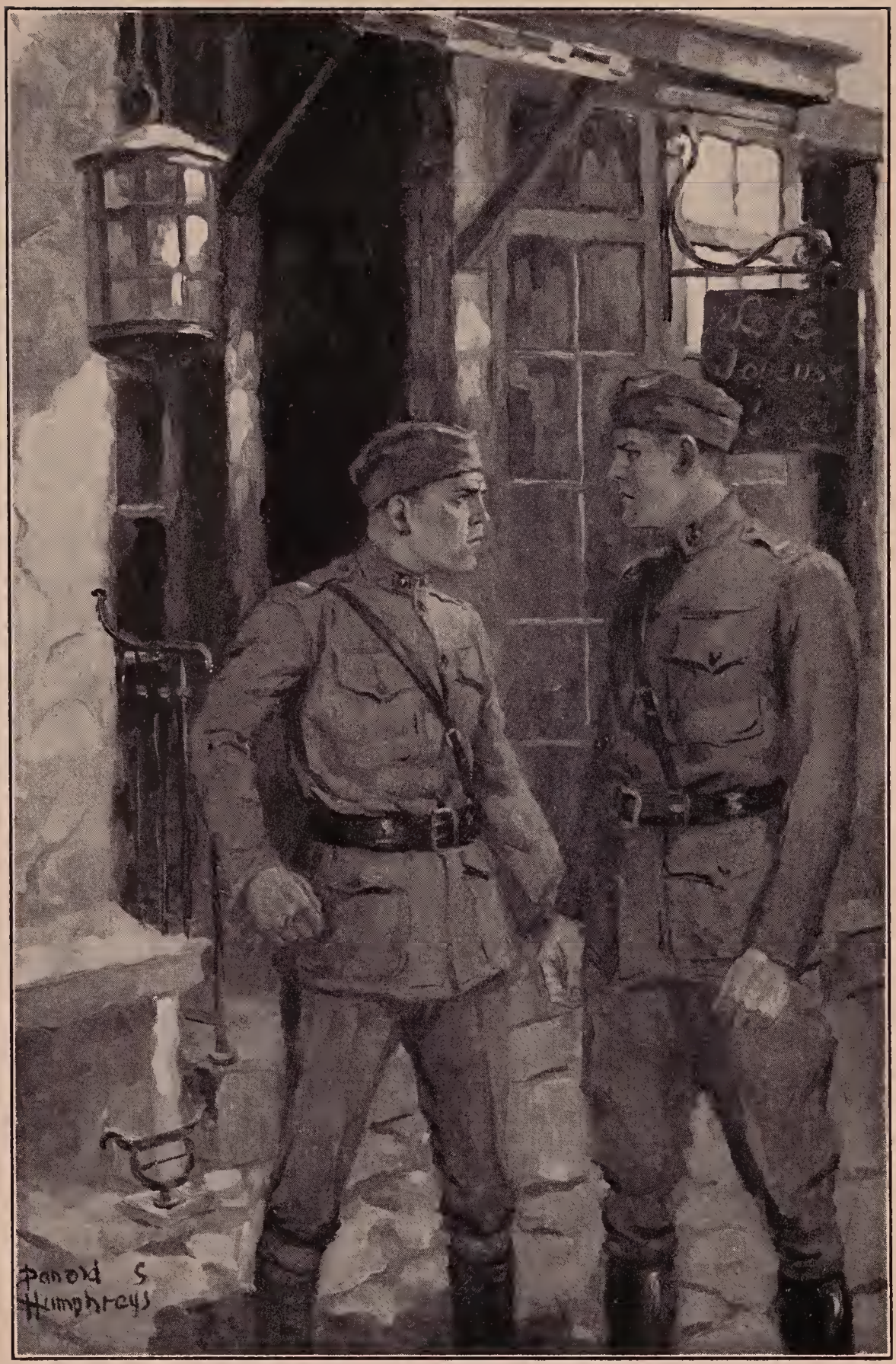


THE TWO STOOD FACING EACH OTHER

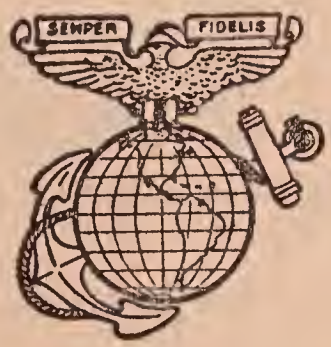
Captain Comstock U. S. M. C.

By

LIEUT.-COL. GILES BISHOP, JR.
United States Marine Corps

Author of

"The Marines Have Landed"
"The Marines Have Advanced"
"Lieutenant Comstock, U. S. Marine"



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To

Major General John Archer Lejeune

United States Marine Corps

Leader of the Second Division of the United States Army in the Great War, during the operations of St. Mihiel, The Champagne and the Meuse-Argonne and always to victory, commander of that division during the march to and across the Rhine, during its eight months' occupation of German territory, and to its return and demobilization in the United States (August, 1918, to September, 1919), and who now holds the highest place of honor in our Corps as its Commandant, this book is respectfully dedicated

INTRODUCTION

In this fourth and last book citing the adventures of Dick Comstock, United States Marine, and his friends, a bare outline, only, is given of the activities of this famous body of fighting men during the World War. That they deported themselves most creditably and heroically cannot be gainsaid, but it is left to others to decide whether or not the turning of the tide was due to them, although, as may be expected, that old veteran of many wars, Mike Dorlan, has no doubts regarding the matter.

To attempt to follow Dick Comstock through the many trying days and nights and on all the battlefields of France is undesirable. Too much already has been written of the horrors of war and for this reason many brilliant actions in which the marines took part have not been mentioned or if so, but lightly; however the main historical facts as given herein are true.

If my young readers have enjoyed reading these volumes, and if by doing so they have been enlightened as to the *raison d'être* of the sea-soldiers of Uncle Sam, then I feel that the time spent in

writing them has been well spent indeed,—my object has been accomplished.

THE AUTHOR.

Coronado, California,
July 31, 1922.

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Captain Comstock, U. S. M. C.

Captain Comstock, U. S. M. C.

CHAPTER I

HIKES AND BILLETS

"WHEW! But I'm good and tired, Dick Comstock, and you can tell General Pershing for me that I don't wish to be disturbed for a week. It's me for the hay," and Lieutenant Tommy Turner of the United States Marine Corps, slowly and carefully drew off one shoe and gently rubbed his stockinged, aching foot.

"Gee whizz!" he continued, grumblingly, while looking about the tiny adjoining rooms which he and Dick, the senior lieutenant of the company, were to occupy as billets for the night. "What is the big idea in chasing us all over France anyway? Do they want to wear out our feet so's we can't run away in case we ever do get mixed up with the Heinies, or what?"

Now the tired boy kicked off the other shoe and watched its flight through the air to the opposite side of the room.

"Look at it from the other angle, Tommy, and it may cheer you up—in other words they are trying to toughen us up by all this, and when we do meet the Huns and get them started running back to Berlin we'll need to be in dandy training in order to keep them in sight," replied his companion, as he delved into his clothing roll in search of soap and towel.

To the casual observer it was quite evident that both these young men were in the pink of training. They practically had been brought up together and though there was a difference of a few years in their ages and a few inches in their heights, both were in Dick's favor. Since the first of Uncle Sam's troops had crossed the Atlantic, Dick had been serving in France under the colors of the Marines. In fact, for a number of years before he had served with that world famous organization and had gone through all the grades from drummer boy to his present rank. Tommy Turner, however, had joined the marines only upon the declaration of war with Germany. Being a bright, capable youngster, his promotion had quickly followed and he was but a few weeks behind Dick in reaching the area of hostilities, and as luck would have it he had been assigned to Dick's company on arrival at St. Nazaire.

"You certainly are the little dickie-bird whose

singing cheers up the tired and fainting heart, friend Richard," answered Tommy. "Ugh, but a bath may change my feelings some, and I know it certainly will change our looks a lot. Mother Turner's only boy would never be recognized should he suddenly blow into his customary seat by the old New England fireside this night; and as for you, sir, you look like a freshly baked mud-pie with a yaller-chalk frosting. Say," as a sudden thought struck him, "I wonder if the fact that we've got an army officer in command of this Marine Brigade now is the cause of all this jumping around from pillar to post?"

"Guess not," was Dick's laconic reply, but a slight frown appeared on his forehead. Then after a moment's thought he added:

"It's too bad not to have an officer of our own corps at our head. If the 'Old Man' only hadn't gotten ill[1] and didn't have to be sent home ——"

"Why in the dickens did the army butt in anyway?" interrupted Tommy. "Why couldn't one of our own colonels have been 'It' just as well as if not better than an army file? My honest opinion is that we marines are so bloomin' good that we're

[1] *Note:* Colonel C. A. Doyen, U. S. M. C., who first commanded the Fourth Brigade in France had been invalided home. He did much toward increasing the efficiency of the Brigade while in command and his loss was deeply regretted by officers and men.

sure to do something big and they want to get in on a share of the glory—that is, we will do it if ever friend Foch decides to use us. Eh?"

"I'm not questioning things," came Dick's answer as he prepared to leave the room, "but I'll say this much—General Pershing must think pretty highly of both us and the officer he placed in command of us. You know General Harbord was Pershing's chief of staff and it's quoted pretty freely that he said to Harbord that he was getting the best outfit on this side of the ocean and if they failed he, Pershing, would know where to lay the blame."

"Oh, I guess Harbord's O. K., well enough. He's got the right spirit too. All hands say he's become a regular marine already, and since the officers of this brigade presented him with our corps' collar ornaments he's discarded the army devices altogether, but—that doesn't excuse him for tramping us all over the globe at the rate we've been going. Do you realize that we've been on the jump ever since that 277th Regiment of Frenchies relieved us up Verdun way on May thirteenth, and here it is nearly the end of the month. Why, everybody said we were going right in, and all we hear is how they're falling back, and yet they don't use us. Look at the places we've been—jaw-breakers to pronounce, all of 'em—Blesmes, Heiltz-

l'eveque, Vitry le Francois, Parmon, Valmondois, and now Marines. We ought to stay here. The town is named even if it isn't pronounced after us, but along come orders to get under way for Vaudancourt in the morning, before we even get our second wind.

"Here we've been stumping along since morning, arrive here at nine fifteen P. M. and off again at daylight—oh, well"—here Tommy gave a prodigious yawn, closing his eyes meanwhile, which gave Dick the opportunity to acquire the youngster's handy soap-box, "I guess we can show him he can't hike the legs off us no matter how hard he tries. Hey! Come back here with my soap." But all the satisfaction he got was to hear Dick's retreating footsteps.

In another moment Tommy had pulled on a pair of old Indian moccasins he had fished from his bedding roll, grabbed a towel and soon had caught up with Dick who was bound for a stream near by which the billeting officer was kind enough to tell him about when the troops arrived in the little village of Marines a short time since.

On returning to their quarters it was not long before they were sound asleep in the welcome fastnesses of old-fashioned feather beds.

Early the following morning the owner of the cottage awakened the two officers. Monsieur and

Madame had sent them up a pot of steaming coffee, hot rolls and fresh eggs as the unrequired but nevertheless welcome evidence of their hospitality. Perhaps this same elderly couple had a boy of their own fighting stubbornly somewhere along the enormous length of battle line, and perhaps their thoughtful little act might tend in some way to lighten that boy's own burden. Who knows?

"I say, Tommy," sang out Dick, who was up instantly on being called, "come on, snap out of it, son! Chow call has sounded," but it took more than words to get the healthy, sleepy Tommy on his feet.

Breakfast was nearly cooked and soon the men of the regiment were enjoying their best meal of the twenty-four hours, for during these days of hiking the rolling kitchen seldom served rations at noon and sometimes arrival at their destination was so late that the troops made but a hurried and unsatisfactory meal at night. Sandwiches were usually prepared at breakfast and packed away in the meat cans of the individual men for noonday consumption.

"Looking at some of these two by four villages we've been stopping at over night of late makes me wonder how our men ever get stowed away with such despatch, and really comfortably too, considering everything," remarked Tommy, a little later

as they were trudging along the well-kept highway.

"It wouldn't be such an easy matter except for system," replied Dick. "Of course these people over here have always been used to the billeting idea and everything runs along smoothly; nothing is thought of it."

"Still I don't believe I'd like the job of billeting officer," said Tommy.

"Why it's a cinch! You see the billeting officer goes on ahead of the column. We'll say that he has to look out for a battalion for instance. He arrives at the town or village and is at once provided by the town *major* with a list showing the number of accommodations available. He then divides the town up accordingly, assigns certain portions to each company and as every company sends a N. C. O. along with the billeting officer, they in turn go over their portion and as soon as we march in we are told where to go."

"Sounds simple, Dick, but how does the N. C. O. decide on the number of men and officers for certain barns, houses and so forth?"

"Surely, Tommy, you have noticed that in each village every available place is placarded or marked; so many officers, so many men, so many horses, as the case may be, and often places tagged with the word 'cuisine,'—kitchen, haven't you?"

"Guess I've not been walking blisters on every toe I own and avoided seeing 'em," was the reply, "but that is what I'm talking about—the N. C. O. has to take a lot of time to tag all these places and he has to be pretty savvy, I think, to judge so correctly how many each place will hold."

Dick laughed heartily.

"There are some things, Tommy Turner, which you seem to see or know before they even happen, but in other ways, at times, you are as dumb as a quahaug." [1]

"Go ahead; laugh and show your ignorance, *mon cher,* and when you get tired suppose you tell me what the joke is about," answered the youngster with an assumed air of hurt feelings.

"Why, Tommy, those signs are up all the time. Every village in France just now is probably posted in that same manner. It is part of the military routine of the country and especially now that she is at war. The town *major* meets our billeting officer on arrival, and informs him of the exact number of troops the town can accommodate; the billeting officer sets to work and divides the spaces up for the number of men for whom he is responsible. He looks after headquarters himself and allots to each non-com representing the companies a certain part equal to the number of men and offi-

[1] The New England name for a round clam—an Indian name.

cers in the company concerned as I said before. Then they in turn proceed to find out where their space is located, and when their company arrives they point them out, that's all. An attempt is always made to give the officers and the higher N. C. O.'s billets in the nicer houses, for of course all cannot fare as well as some."

"No, you're dead right there, Dickie. I don't believe any of 'em had as nice billets as we had last night for instance. Only my feather bed was a little too hot for comfort at this time of the year."

"You slept as if it was," replied Dick, drily, and then changing the subject rather abruptly, he said: "I hear that this is our last hike for a while and that to-morrow we start some intensive training, whatever that may mean."

"Intensive training!—Great Jehoshaphat, what d'you call all this we've been doing for the past week, I'd like to know?"

"Well, it will be something different, I imagine. We have been hiking a lot and getting hardened, but I mean drills now, and there's a pretty well founded rumor that we are here to back up the English in case they begin to give way. They're being pressed mighty hard east of Soissons and we're liable to be sent in there at any old time."

"What do you mean? Just this regiment?"

"Oh, no, the whole lot of us, I guess."

"I don't wish the British any bad luck, Dick, but I certainly hope they hurry up and send us somewhere and give us a real chance," said Tommy earnestly. "We are all marines in this brigade and we'll make the whole blooming outfit wish they were marines too after we once get busy with those Heinies. The 'Old Man'[1] will never have to say he's sorry he had us under him, but as I've said before, I'm mighty sorry he's not a marine officer for we'll promote him to command the Division, 'as sure as shootin',' if he gives us half a chance, and as long as we've got to push someone into the limelight it really should be one of our own corps. Hey what?"

[1] The commanding officer of any organization is familiarly called the "Old Man."

CHAPTER II

"REDDY" DOYLE REPORTS FOR DUTY

"THE Colonel's compliments, and he desires to see Lieutenant Comstock at Regimental P. C., at once, sir."

The orderly, after receiving Dick's nod of acknowledgment, saluted, and turning about proceeded on his way.

"Wonder what's up?" queried Tommy Turner. "I was talking with Captain Harrison a while ago and he was sent for—do you suppose this means real business, or is it another one of these everlasting moves?"

"Haven't an idea in the world," answered Dick, "but I do know I'm mighty dirty after that strenuous drill we had this afternoon and I don't feel much like reporting to the C. O. looking like this."

"If you're dirty then I'd hate to be a clean Marine," chirped Tommy, "for in that case no one would believe that I was real."

And Tommy's words held a lot of truth in them, for probably there never was a cleaner soldier under all conditions of service than this ex-drummer boy, now a full-fledged officer. Dick had been

brought up correctly in his first years of service with the corps, under strict sergeants of the old days to whom a speck of dirt on equipment, or a stain on uniform was almost a criminal offense, and he had never forgotten the value of ky-yi brushes, soap and elbow grease, nor was he too indolent to make good use of his knowledge in that respect.

"Anything in my kit which you're particularly hankering for, Tommy?" he asked, bending over to tuck in the loose end of a puttee legging. "If so you'll never get it with such blarney," and off he went to report.

On arrival at regimental headquarters he immediately was ushered into the presence of the colonel.

"Ah, good-afternoon, Captain!"

Dick looked over his shoulder thinking that possibly some other officer had entered in rear of him and whom the colonel was addressing, but seeing no one and believing the older officer had momentarily forgotten his rank, he made haste to reply:

"Good-afternoon, sir! Lieutenant Comstock reports in obedience to your orders, sir."

"Yes, yes; sit down, Captain," and at this repetition Dick gave his superior a searching glance. It flashed through his mind that possibly his C. O. was ill, but he was met by a look indicating a no inconsiderable pleasure on the older man's face. "But before you do so, accept my heartiest congratula-

tions on your promotion, Captain Comstock," and rising he held out his hand to the nearly speechless young man who finally did get enough strength to step forward and grasp it.

"What! Me—a captain?" floundered Dick in the trough of a grammatical sea. "Do you honestly mean it, sir?" he ended with most unmilitary audacity.

"I'm not likely to be fooling, young man," came the patient reply. "Now, for the second time—please sit down, Captain."

This time Dick obeyed, and suddenly too, for his joints seemed to give way beneath him.

"I grant you, promotions are fearfully rapid these days," continued the colonel, "much too rapid in most cases for the good of the men concerned or for the corps, but it has to be done and in due time matters will adjust themselves. Those fit will eventually be placed in the right niche—lower or higher as the case may be. Have a cigar—no? That's right, keep on the smoke wagon, you'll have better wind for running—and understand, I'm not saying all this about promotion for your especial benefit—I have no fears where you are concerned and ——"

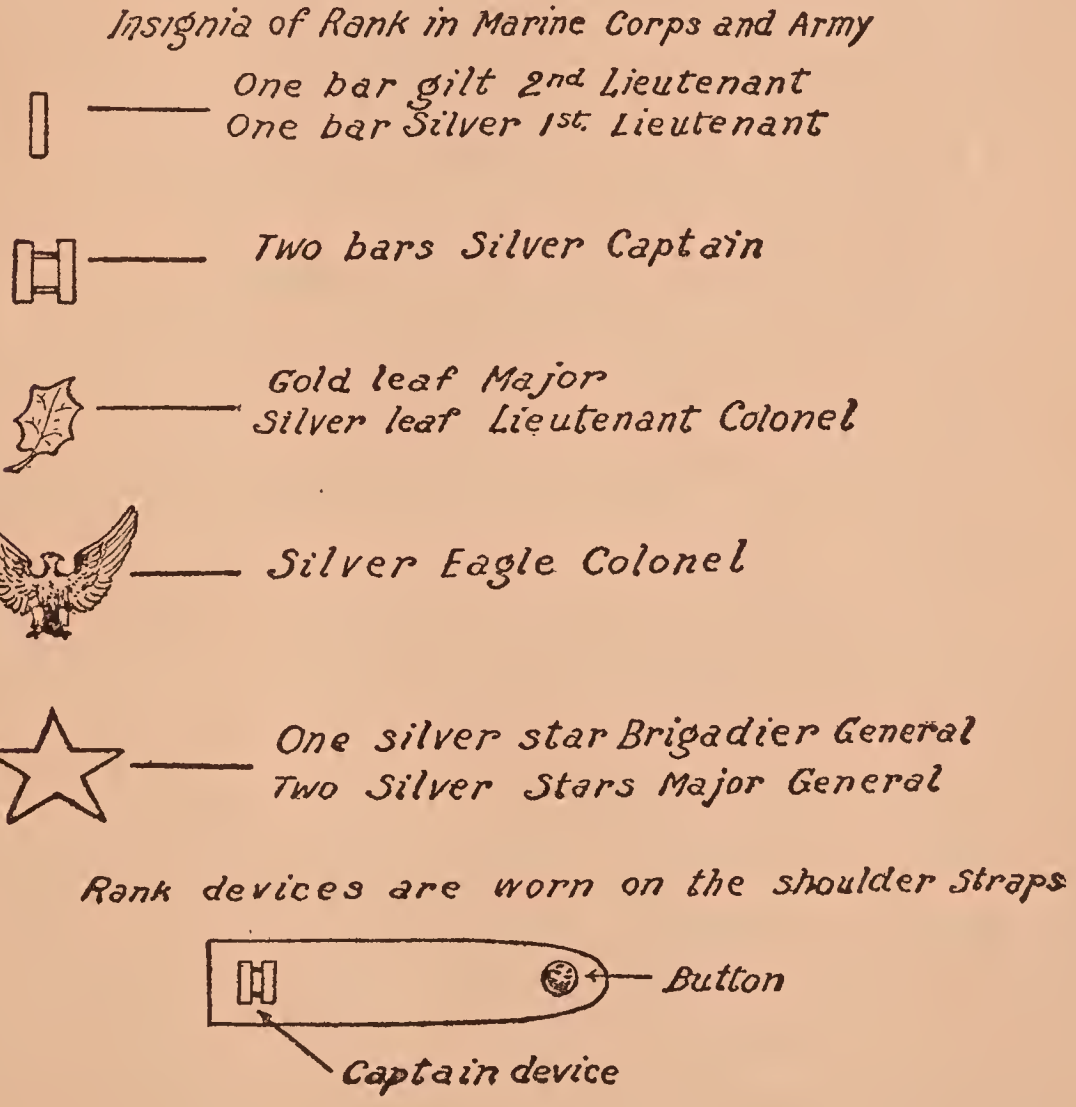
"But I have, sir," said Dick, recovering a little from his surprise.

"It is as well you should have. It is the young

whipper-snappers who know nothing and think they know it all to whom I was referring—those liable to get swelled heads;—but to get back to business. Here is your commission as a temporary captain in the corps, signed by the Secretary of the Navy," and he handed across the table the commission made out on an ordinary sheet of official paper. Usually commissions are quite impressive affairs, engraved and beautifully filled in, on sheepskin parchment, bearing the signatures of the President of the United States and other high dignataries, and the stamped official seal of the government over a blue wafer, but in time of war the temporary affairs could not be (nor were they desired) like the peace-time article.

"Now, Captain,"—Dick's eyes fairly jumped from the paper, "of course you must expect a change of duty with your new rank and ——" Dick had not thought of that, but now it came home to him that it was going to be a very difficult undertaking in a way to leave his old company and his old friends with whom he had served ever since the beginning of the war. Who would look after Tommy Turner—careless, joyous Tommy, and keep him out of hot water? What about First Sergeant Dorlan—old, faithful, devoted Mike, and what about the company itself? He never could leave that outfit—never! Involuntarily he half arose

from his chair, his hand unconsciously shot outward and in it was the newly arrived commission, as if the returning of it might forestall the pending disaster. Suddenly with a powerful effort the lad got control of himself and leaned back in the chair again, but his face was no longer excited and happy.


Insignia of Rank in Marine Corps and Army
One bar gilt 2nd Lieutenant
One bar Silver 1st Lieutenant
Two bars Silver Captain
Gold leaf Major
Silver leaf Lieutenant Colonel
Silver Eagle Colonel
One silver star Brigadier General
Two Silver Stars Major General
Rank devices are worn on the shoulder Straps
Button
Captain device

This little pantomime had not escaped the keen eyes of the colonel and when he took up the sentence which he had begun and for a moment paused

in in the making, he went off at a very different angle from that which was in his mind primarily.

"—and—ah—and—ah, I believe that I will allow you to keep on in command of the company with which you have been serving. Yes, I will do that, and in the meantime think of something else for you, but for the present no change. By the time you return to your company billets you will find that Captain Harrison will be about ready to leave you, for he has at last received the rank of major which he richly deserves. He is to take command of the battalion. I'll have your orders made out at once and send them over to your quarters; and, by the way, an army lieutenant will report to you for duty, either to-night or to-morrow morning.

"As you know we have a number of these subalterns in the brigade with us and it is our duty to see that they learn something before they leave: that is why they are sent. The army itself has a big task to get all their raw material into shape for the struggle and they are gladly giving our higher officers larger commands while serving in their regiments in exchange for our training a few of their youngsters. It helps both sides. I had thought of sending you over to them for a while, but—well—h'mmmm—I've decided otherwise. That will do, Captain! It is unnecessary to tell you what I ex-

pect of you and your company. You know what I want. You are indoctrinated with our corps' motto —Semper Fidelis—always faithful! Good-afternoon, sir."

Tommy Turner was loud in his greeting upon Dick's return, for Captain, now Major, Harrison had told him of the promotion, and even the major was agreeably surprised when Dick announced that he was not to be transferred for duty with the army but instead was to continue on with the old company.

"I'd have been lost if they'd sent you away," said Tommy honestly, "and furthermore Captain Har—I mean Major Harrison was hoping the Colonel would change his mind. He strongly recommended that you succeed to the place left vacant by him. I just know too that it's the best thing for the company. Old Mike would never last without you, Dick, and the men will pull together as never before for you. I was fearful of a rupture of some sort in case of a new captain ——"

"Nice of you to say all this, Tommy, and I know you really believe it, but they'd work just as well, I guess, with ——"

"No, Dick, you know that you have really held the company together. There are a lot of them who would have started things on several occasions had you not sized up the situation

correctly and done just the right things to avoid trouble."

"As a rule, Tommy, you'll find that true in every kind of an organization of men—a few scapegoats, but if a little care is taken with them everything runs along smoothly."

"That's the idea, Dick—excuse me, sir—I meant to say 'Captain'—that is just it, there needs to be someone around able to do the right thing. I don't mean to say the men wouldn't fight their heads off when the time came, but they've been on good behavior such a long while that they're just bustin' to break loose. By the way, are you going to move over to Cap—Major Harrison's billet?" ended Tommy with a sudden change of subject.

"No, I'll not change now. The new officer when he reports may take up over there."

"Lieutenant Doyle of the National Army is here to report to the Captain, sir," came a voice from outside the door which followed a knocking, then in response to Dick's "Come in," a tall, red-headed, strapping young man entered the room.

Recognition was mutual on his appearance. His hand, half-way to his cap in salute, stopped its course, when both Dick and Tommy exclaimed in a breath:

"Reddy Doyle!"

The newly-arrived officer unbent with alacrity as he in his turn exclaimed: "Dick—Tommy Turner!" and there was indeed a warm welcome accorded him, while the flow of talk continued for some time fast and furious between the three.

"It is years since we've met, Dick," said Doyle after the first outrush of question and answer had somewhat subsided, "not since our High School graduation exercises in the old Lyceum, back home. Let's see, how many years is it?"

"Don't count them up, Reddy. I'll begin to feel like an old man if you do."

"Speaking of 'old man,' reminds me of the fact that here we've been chewing the rag all this time and I'm supposed to report to the 'Old Man' of this company—Captain Karmster—isn't that the name? The Adjutant was so mumbly I couldn't get it."

"That's a good one, Reddy; there's the 'Old Man' of this outfit sitting right in front of you," sang out Tommy, gleefully. "You got the name twisted, that's all. There he is, Captain Comstock, if you please, sir."

"Er—what?" questioned the astonished Doyle, while his eyes quickly noted the lone silver bar on either shoulder of Dick's uniform coat. "Quit your kiddin', Tommy, and lead me to him, else I'm liable to get 'in Dutch' right off the bat, and good-

ness knows I want to keep out of hot water if I can for a little while."

"I'm not kidding you, Red. Dick has just received his commish as *Monsieur le Capitaine*. Up on your feet, man, and render his august personage all the honor due from a first leftenant to the wearer of the double bars."

Still Doyle looked doubtful and a little bit ruffled until Dick's quiet affirmation finally convinced him as to the actual facts, but instantly a mental barrier arose between the three of them and the new feeling of comradeship was nipped in the bud. So long as Dick and Doyle were of equal rank the latter did not mind in the least, but to find that Dick was now a captain and, worst of all, his own company commander, from whom he must receive instruction and to whose word he must give way, was a hard and bitter pill for First Lieutenant Percy Doyle of the National Army to swallow.

Again the spirit of rivalry which had existed between the two in the old days at school came to the fore. Once again Dick Comstock had walked off with the honors as he had done in the years gone by, and as before Reddy Doyle would not permit friendship to exist. That first sensation of affiliation which Dick had hoped was the changing of the old attitude of Doyle into pleasanter channels was lost and perhaps gone forever.

"Well, Captain," remarked Percy after a little more talk which was no longer filled with spontaneity, despite efforts on Dick's part, "I believe I will go to my billets if you will be kind enough to inform me where they are."

"We will walk over with you, Red," Dick replied, in a tone he firmly believed was a cordial one, and he arose to suit action to his words.

"Not for a minute, thank you, Captain. Just have the orderly point them out to me, if you don't mind," said Doyle stiffly.

Dick wanted to say something then and there which would put a stop once and for all to Doyle's foolish attitude, but he decided it would be better to wait until some time when Tommy was not around and then have a quiet talk with this old classmate and endeavor to straighten out in some way this unwarranted feeling of hostility which he could not help but feel was in the atmosphere.

There was nothing disrespectful in Doyle's manner,—nothing really tangible at least, nothing to which exception might as yet be taken, and he realized that the nut was going to be a hard one to crack, but for the sake of everyone concerned, the company, the corps and themselves, it must be cracked, and Dick must be extremely careful how he went about it.

That Doyle's character had not changed in the

least was evident. He was as ready as ever to take exception to that which did not in all respects please him: to be hurt at imagined wrongs: to make mountains out of mole-hills. Yes, it needed careful consideration, but Dick resolved that it should be accomplished in the end.

"Orderly!"

His ringing voice brought the marine promptly in answer to the summons. "Show Lieutenant Doyle to Major Harrison's old billet at once."

Then turning to Reddy he extended his hand. "We will see you later at mess, Reddy. Glad to have you with us and if there is a single thing I can do to assist you don't fail to let me know. Incidentally, we believe our company is the best in the outfit and we want you to help us keep it so."

Lieutenant Doyle apparently failed to see the extended hand as he bent to pick up the suitcase he had deposited on the floor on entering.

"Thank you, Captain," was all he said, and with a salute, he turned and followed the orderly out of the room.

"If I'd been you, I'd have kicked him down the stairs ——" began Tommy, furiously.

"Wait! Hold on a minute, Tommy," interrupted Dick. "Forget it! I'm going to try to, and listen to me, kid, we've got to make Doyle one of us, understand. I know he bullied you at school,

and I know he takes a peculiar view of things in general. Well, Tommy, it is up to us to change that. He has been sent here for instruction and he's going to get it from all angles, and they will be glad to get him back in the army and we will be sorry to see him leave. We're getting too much grown up to allow this sort of foolishness to affect us and we've got to make Red see it that way also."

"Oh, I'll be decent enough, Dick. I was at first, but let me tell you it goes against the grain mighty hard, *mon cher,* and if he starts anything with me, he'll find that Tommy Turner of the Marines has got a couple of handy fists and knows how to use them better than that same Tommy Turner of Bankley High used to know how to throw snowballs at seniors, and to better advantage, let me tell."

"There you go, Tommy, starting in wrong, boy! Remember this, that any friction between the officers is quickly noted by the men and if they get an inkling of this attitude on Doyle's part, it is going to make more trouble than you can imagine. Doyle can be mighty pleasant if he wishes to be and he can and will make himself popular, especially among certain men. To tell the truth it is too bad that he joined this company. It does seem that he had more than his share of this particular scion of the Comstock family during his earlier

career and it's rather rubbing it in to have the Fates hand it to him again after all these years."

"All right, Dick, I'll watch out, but he'd better not monkey with me, that's all," said Tommy, and Dick shook his head, amused in spite of himself.

Yes, there were some things in which Tommy proved himself as stubborn, if not as dumb, as a quahaug.

CHAPTER III

TOMMY NEARLY LOSES SOMETHING

As Dick had predicted, the coming days were filled to overflowing with hard, arduous work for the Marine Brigade. Besides brushing up on certain phases of attack and defense, there were new methods pursued along various lines already adopted at the front, new experiments to be given a trial, and from early dawn till sometimes late at night the work kept up with unremitting vigor.

Nevertheless there were many opportunities for recreation in the immediate vicinity of the billets, and that the men after a day of such strenuous compulsory work still had enough vitality and "pep" left to engage in additional athletic feats upon the completion of their tasks, spoke most highly of their physical prowess and high standard of morale.

Reddy Doyle slipped into his niche in the company with most commendable ease and assurance, and though his manner toward Dick was cool and distant he was always most punctilious and maintained the strict official bearing of a junior toward his superior at all times. It was as if he and Dick

had never met before and though Dick could find no fault with Reddy the very atmosphere when they were together seemed electrified.

"It's almost like sitting on top of a blooming volcano and expecting the darn thing to blow up without a moment's notice," remarked Tommy, one afternoon as Reddy withdrew at the conclusion of a company conference.

"And as for me," continued the lad, "well, he treats me in such a manner that I feel like biting him in the leg, just to let him know that I'm around and ready for business."

"Never mind, Tommy, remember what I said the night he arrived, and I believe everything will eventually turn out all right. Doyle is getting on splendidly with the men in the company and you can't say he is inattentive to his duties nor lacking in his official dealings toward me."

"But that is where you're wrong, Dick. I tell you he is lacking in respect. His manner speaks louder than his words. Why, hang it all, sometimes I could go right up and punch him in the eye, I get so riled with his exact salutes, his ——"

"Now, Tommy, cut that out," said Dick sternly, and turning he strolled away down the village street, but his mind was full of Reddy Doyle as he strode along over the worn cobblestones.

"It is just as Tommy says, though," he mused,

kicking a stray pebble from his path with unwarranted viciousness, "and at times I too experience the same feeling that Tommy has—as if I couldn't hold in another minute. I want to take him across my knee and apply a sound whaling with a good, broad shingle. It's all I can do to keep my temper in check—he just seems to emit antagonism in his every word, look and action. I only hope I'll have enough self-control to refrain from making a fool of myself before this rumpus is over."

"Good-evenin', Misther Dick—sir—I mean," came a salutation to break in on these unhappy musings.

It was old First Sergeant Mike Dorlan, Dick's first friend in the Marine Corps and the one who had been his mentor and guide since his entry into the service years before. The old fellow always had difficulty in remembering his young friend's constantly changing rank, and more than half the time addressed him as "Dick, me lad," much to everyone's amusement.

"And are ye goin' down to watch the shot-puttin'?" questioned the old fellow, as he fell in at Dick's left side and took up the step.

"Shot-putting? What do you mean, Mike?" inquired Dick, only too glad of something to change his train of thoughts.

"I thought as p'raps ye knew, sir. Ye see

Loot'nent Doyle is learnin' some of the men how to chuck one of them irron shot, sir, over in the field there. Last evenin' one of the old Frinch fellers what lives in the village gave the men an old round cannon ball which he claims was fired at his house by the Germans durin' the war of 1870. It weighs about sixteen pound, I'm thinkin', and they began throwin' it fer distance when the Loot'nent happened along and told 'em how to toss the thing without dislocatin' their shoulder, as wan young feller nearly done, and he said he'd be over to-night to give 'em more instruction—that's the meanin' of the crowd over there now, I'm thinkin'."

"Let us go over and see," said Dick. "I'm glad to hear that Mr. Doyle is getting on so well with the company."

"Oh, yes, he's a-doin' fine, sir, and begorra he's gettin' the right spirit too. He spends a lot of time talkin' with the older men—those who've been in the corps for many years, and he picks up a lot of the best dope that way, just as you did, Misther Dick. As he once said to me, 'I want to learn all this stuff so's I won't be after askin' foolish questions of the Capt'in all the toime and botherin' him wid me ignorance!' Yes, he's makin' good, all right," ended Mike, so enthusiastically that Dick experienced a slight twinge of jealousy at this fulsome praise from his old bunkie.

Arriving in the field a few moments later they stood on the outskirts of the group watching what was transpiring.

Several men essayed to throw the ball with some semblance of the proper form, but at best they were poor imitators and those who knew nothing of the sport were greatly surprised to find what short distances only they were able to hurl the iron sphere.

After a number more had made the trial and their distances recorded, Reddy Doyle stepped forward, and with a " Here, let me show you again how it's done," he took the shot, poised in balance for a moment, then taking the seemingly meaningless but necessary steps forward, shot his right hand outward from his shoulder. The ball seemed to leap from his hand and Doyle, twisting to the left at the edge of the rough ring marked on the ground, kept safely within its confines.

On measurement it was found that the distance of his " put " exceeded by six and one-half feet the best record made by any of the men, and a deserving cheer followed this exhibition of skill and strength. Reddy's reputation was now firmly established and from then on until dark he instructed the men in the proper method and shared with them their pleasure over the immediate improvement they made.

" We will have to make you the athletic officer

for the company, Mr. Doyle," said Dick, who had advanced nearer the instructor.

"My time with your company will be of such short duration I hardly consider it would be advisable, sir," answered Reddy, who for the first time was aware of Dick's presence, then picking up his coat from the ground he turned abruptly on his heel and left the little group.

Though his words were temperate and his manner most military, there was not a man present who did not feel that Doyle had meant to be disrespectful, and as Dick too walked on there followed a little flurry of excited talk.

"Yea, Bo! Guess the new Loot handed somethin' to the Old Man that time, eh?"

"Sure sounded like it to me."

"Yes, and did you see the Captain flush up? Wow, I thought at first that there'd be something doing. The words were all right, but that manner of his, though apparently O. K. was—well, it looked mighty akin to disrespect or insubordination or something," spoke up an older non-com in the crowd.

"They aren't very chummy, that's true," said another, then he added, "I heard they used to be school kids together back in their home town and that the Captain never did like Doyle. They could never get on together."

"Well, ye can bet yer life that it was no fault of Captain Dick's. So don't you believe that kind of stuff, friend. He's not that sort of a man," came an instant defender to the front. "And that's enough fer you, young feller with the long tongue, and as long as ye don't know nuthin' about it, ye'll be profitin' by a wurrd of advice, me buck, and be for keepin' yer mouth shut up a bit tighter," came the voice of Top Sergeant Dorlan over the heads of those nearest the speaker. "Stories the loikes of that without no foundation, at all, at all, is bad business to be a-startin'," he ended.

But as the days passed that little innuendo continued to grow, fed from some unknown source, and soon a well exploited, unpleasant story had gained credence among certain members of the company.

The following morning in the official mail Dick found a number of letters forwarded to Lieutenant Doyle from that officer's former station, and while sorting them, Dick noticed one letter bearing the postmark of the town in New England where both he and Reddy had spent their boyhood.

It had been some time now since Dick had received mail from his home, and as he held the letter for the moment in his hand he wondered what local items of interest to him it might contain. Lost in

thought he did not hear the voice of Doyle addressing him and it was not until that officer repeated his demand that Dick awoke from his day-dream to a sudden realization that he was still holding and gazing at Reddy's letter.

"If you don't mind, Captain Comstock, I'd like to have a chance to see whom that letter is from for myself," said Doyle in an insinuating, sneering tone of voice, and Dick, greatly embarrassed at the situation, and feeling that his action in holding the letter as he did could have been misunderstood, placed it on the pile with the others, and then with a grim set of the jaw, without a word for fear he might say too much, he busied himself with his own mail.

Doyle, after gathering up his possessions, saluted and departed from the room with a sarcastic smile on his face.

Tommy Turner, who had witnessed the entire proceeding, also slipped from the room and reaching the street hurried after the red-haired officer, now some distance away. Arriving at Doyle's side, Tommy suddenly took Reddy by the arm and swung him about so that the two stood facing each other; the youngster hot and glaring, the elder, cool and collected, but likewise curious.

"What's the meaning of this assault, young man?" demanded Reddy.

"It means that either you go back and instantly apologize to Dick for your rotten insinuation, or I'm going to take it out of you."

The words seemed to explode under Doyle's very nose.

"To what are you referring, Mister Turner?" said Reddy coolly. "It would appear to me, if any apologies are due, they are due me for this unwarranted attack, and I might add also, your most extravagant words."

"Come off your high horse, Reddy Doyle," roared Tommy, getting hotter and hotter. "I don't need to tell you what I mean, and if Dick Comstock didn't happen to be your Captain and company commander, he'd give you the thrashing of your young life."

Doyle's temper, never very far from the surface, was in its turn beginning to rise to the occasion, and with a "Get out of my way, you poor little stool pigeon," he pushed Tommy none too gently out of his path and strode on.

"I'll beat you up for that, you—you—you—red head," roared Tommy, as he attempted to lunge after the rapidly walking Doyle, but to his surprise he seemed to be pinned to the spot. Next he became aware of a strong hand holding to the shoulder strap of his Sam Browne belt, and turning he found himself face to face with old Dorlan.

"Beggin' yer pardon, sir, but this here strap seems to be needin' a bit of adjustin' and I took the liberty of thryin' to fix it fer ye, sir," and Mike's big fingers still fumbled at Tommy's back, but never once released their tight hold.

"There ye are, sir, 'tis fixed. I noticed the throuble as ye left the office and feared ye might be losin' of somethin', sir, if I didn't come after and tell ye about it."

By now Doyle had turned the corner and was no longer in sight.

"Thank you, Mike," said Tommy after a moment of thought, and he looked squarely into the keen old eyes. "Yes, I did nearly lose my temper, and if you hadn't happened along when you did I might also have lost my commission."

"Yes, sir, ye have to keep an eye open all the toime these days," said Mike, nodding sagely. "Ye have to be watchin' yer belt for more than wan reason, and rememberin' to keep the gadget tight buckled."

CHAPTER IV

INTO THE FRAY

"HEY, Tommy, something doing! Come on, wake up, you lazy bones, we're in for it," shouted Dick, rushing into the quarters occupied by his junior lieutenant and himself early on the morning of May 31st of the year nineteen hundred and eighteen. "Shake a leg there, son! This is no time to stretch yourself and yawn. Hustle! I tell you we're off for the big fight."

"Ah, go on, Dick, and don't be bothering me," answered Tommy in anything but the customary manner of a junior officer addressing a captain, and with the remark he rolled over to start on another "lap" of his sleeping race.

Dick did not hesitate a moment as to his next move. He grabbed the ticking of Tommy's feather mattress, gave it a quick jerk and tumbled the young gentleman on the floor in less than no time.

"I tell you, Tommy, it's the real thing. The whole brigade is on the move. Orders for this outfit to march in ten minutes. Throw your stuff into your roll [1] as fast as you can and get outside with it."

[1] Bedding roll which officers carry while on campaign.

"Do you really mean it?" gasped Tommy, too much overcome at what Dick said to think about being indignant over the ignominious spilling he had received. "Is there something doing this time, sure?"

"You bet," was the reply, and Dick, packing his clothing and field kit together and strapping up his bedding roll, went on rapidly. "No one, unless it's the General, knows exactly what is up, but there's the dickens to pay. The Germans are breaking through the lines. They've launched a new offensive and are driving a big wedge between Soissons and Rheims, right toward Paris. The French simply can't hold 'em back. They are attacking by the thousands. The fight began on the 27th and the French are literally being cut into bits."

"And they're going to send us in, to stop them?"

Tommy was by now pulling on his clothes with a speed which needed no goad.

"That's the idea, and according to all accounts we're going to find our hands full, right enough. You see all the time since Russia backed out of the scrap the Huns have been transporting their armies from the Russian front over to this side. They're all perked up on account of their recent successes and have new troops to throw into the line wherever

and whenever they wish to do so. Are you almost ready?"

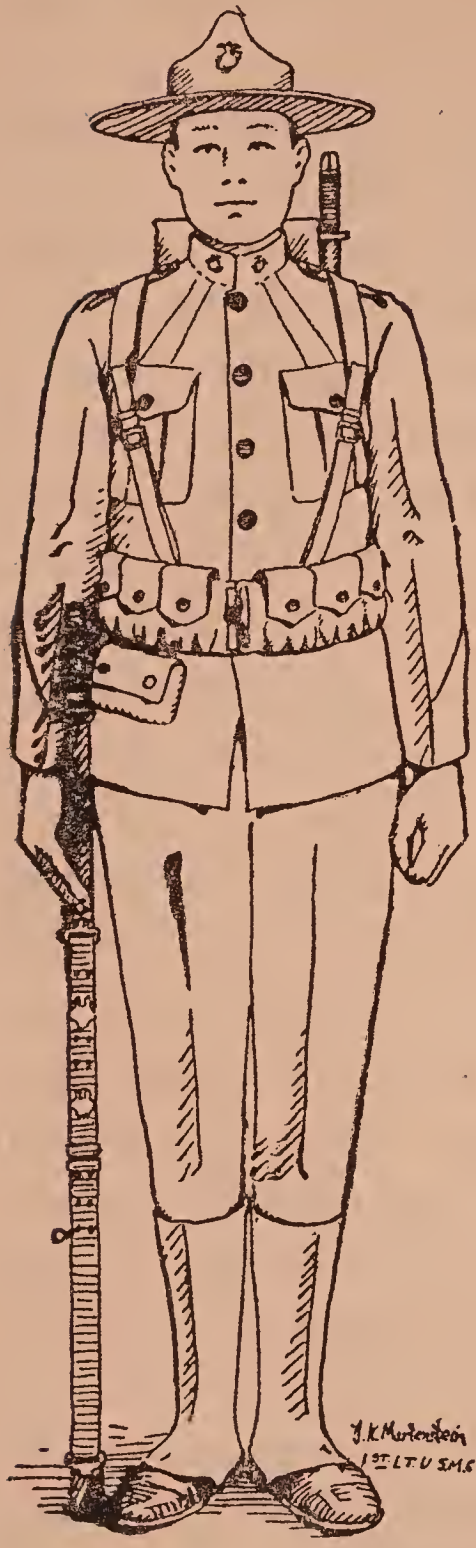
"Ready? I don't need any of this blooming stuff if it's a case of getting out to stop those scoundrels," said Tommy vehemently, "and don't worry, we'll stop 'em right and set them on the back trail in a jiffy with their tails between their legs."

"Don't be foolish; you must have your stuff along in case of need. Grab what you can and be ready in five minutes," and off dashed Dick out into the cobblestoned streets of Vaudancourt in the vicinity of which town the brigade had been undergoing their ten days of the most strenuous training they had so far experienced in France.

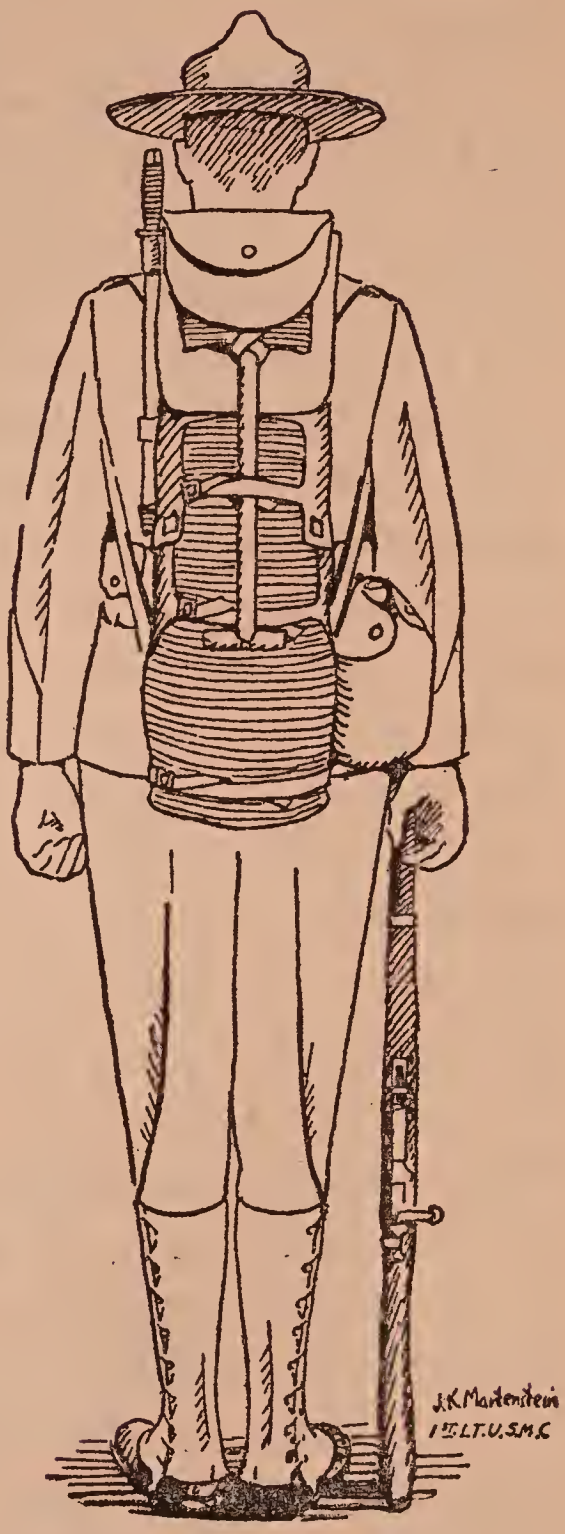
Already the marines were piling into the street and lining up in long rows in front of their billets. The place was filled with armed soldiers, with native men and women, with the ubiquitous small boy even at this early hour. There were shouts and cries, laughter and tears, song and sadness, joyous whistles and cheers, as one after another of the ranks wheeled away and went swinging down the road toward Daughn.

The weight of the heavy packs was not felt. Sore feet were forgotten. Days of strict drill and discipline were dismissed from the mind. The past with its memories, rich or poor as the case might be, was cast aside for the future—the day for which all

CAPTAIN COMSTOCK, U. S. M. C.



Front View.



Rear View.

THE NEW BLANKET ROLL.

their trials and tribulations had been training them, hardening them—the day when at last, in a solid body, shoulder to shoulder, they might meet and measure swords with the hated Boche.

They sang as they swung along under the rays of the early morning sun,—these boys and men so light of heart, for they were thrilled with the thought that their day was now at hand.

"We'll show 'em, gol durn 'em," smiled a long, lean private from "way down East."

"I say, Top, did you-all get any dope as to what's goin' on?" questioned a bright looking, young southerner.

"Begorra, there's plenty of dope and little enough of the real facts," answered First Sergeant Dorlan. "Them Frinchies are about dyin' in their thracks. And it ain't from shot and shell alone, it's from being just nacherally tuckered out with harrd foightin'. The poor divils haven't had no relief at all for weeks and weeks, and that old German war lord, Luden-duff's[1] his name, I'm thinkin', is throwin' of fresh Heinies into the battle all of the toime."

"Where do they say we're going in, Sergeant?" asked another private, a graduate of Yale and one of that university's famous track athletes.

"I don't rightly know, son," responded Mike,

[1] Ludendorf.

" but by simmerin' down all the rumors it's pretty sure that we'll be for goin' out past Paree and up around a place called Shatter Teary,[1] and when we git there them tired Frinchmen are goin' to fall back through us, and we're to keep on a-fallin' back, and holdin' the Dutchmen from comin' too fast—till somethin' happens—at least them's the orders," and Mike looked at the Yale man and gave him a comprehensive wink, and the university-trained man returned it.

" Of course, as ye know, orders is orders, but I never see a bunch av m'rines goin' into a foight yet where they intended to do anny fallin' back, and I'm thinkin' this here ain't a-goin' to be no different now than it ever has been."

At Daughn they rested and soon great clouds of dust were to be observed far down the road. Transportation was to arrive for them at ten o'clock sharp, and right on the stroke of the hour, with a thoroughness and promptness which was characteristic of the French during the entire war, the rattle and roar of heavy motor cars filled the air as camion after camion came rushing up the village streets from the southeast to take aboard their loads of human freight.

Twenty to thirty men these great machines held and no sooner was one filled up than off it started

[1] Chateau Thierry.

in the direction of Paris. Before reaching the great city their course was changed and they passed through many beautiful suburbs, where ornate residences of the rich were charming with their wealth of well-kept lawn, and hedge, and garden. Here crowds met them; lined the way on either side; flung flowers at the laughing warriors, cheered them, fêted them. *Vive les Americaines! Vive la France!*

From wonderfully tended suburban streets to the mighty Metz highway, on past growing crops in the pleasant fields, wended the camions. And now the road became a steady stream of soldiery. Great guns rattled and swayed behind powerful tractors bulkily moving with the current. Foot soldiers, lighter field guns trundled along behind tired and straining horses. Troop on troop of cavalry, their lances shining in the sun like a forest of Brobdingnagian pins with their sharp ends pointed heavenward. Great throbbing motor cars carrying forward some general and his staff. Train after train bearing ammunition to feed the guns, forage to feed the horses, rations to feed the men.

On and on, through great clouds of dust which grew and grew, caking on the backs of horses, on the faces of the men, covering their clothing with its fine powder, stinging their eyes, parching their throats.

And now came the saddest sight that these marines had yet witnessed since their advent into the struggle. It was the counter current of humanity fleeing before the advance of rapidly-advancing, victory-maddened invaders.

There they came, an heterogeneous multitude. There were horse-drawn carts, ox-drawn carts, dog-drawn carts, men and women and children-drawn carts, piled high with such manner of household effects as came first to hand when the owners knew they finally must flee else suffer still greater loss and possible death should they remain behind. Old women and tottering old men; toddling children, babes in arms, wearily struggling southward or resting, dead tired, in the fields near the roadside. No glow lit their faces. No cheers for those going forward were here, and yet no tear of futile despair dimmed their eyes, but like driven sheep, patient, heart-wounded, soul-rended, they bore their cross; leaving behind them their homes, their tilled fields, their growing crops. Poor, patient, plodding, innocent victims of a wicked nation's greed.

Here no bouquets of flowers were flung to these sea-soldiers of Uncle Sam, but if ever the iron resolution "to avenge" entered the body and soul of each and every man who saw this heart-breaking review it was on this day after Memorial Day as they went flashing by in their crowded camions,

bound for their baptism of shot and shell and poison gas; bound for their entry into the real hell of war.

"Sure, and I wish I was big enough to gather every mother's son of them in me arrms—aye, and the mothers too, God bless 'em, and rock them all to sleep—the poor, brave, tired bodies," mumbled old Mike, "and don't ye laugh at me, ye young leatherneck, just because I'm a-wipin' of a bug out of me eye, or I'll be givin' ye some plenty days extra police duty and I get ye back to the States ag'in."

"He's not laughing, Sarge," said a marine squeezed in close beside the old sergeant. "The boy's crying himself."

"Don't ye suppose I know it, ye fool, and that if I don't be gettin' mad at somethin' I'll be blubberin' too? Drat that fly annyway," and this time the old fellow made out to blow his nose vigorously, with much waving of a red, bandanna handkerchief.

"What is the name of the last city we passed through?" asked someone in the rear.

"That there is called Mooks [1] or some such name and them people livin' there didn't look none too happy, I'm thinkin'. They say everyone fears them Heinies is comin' right on down the Paree-

[1] Meaux.

Metz highway into the capital itself, and they don't see how annythin' is goin' to save them."

"I reckon it's up to us Marines and no mistake, this time, fellers," sang out a stocky, fair-haired lad from the Middle West.

"We're with you, boy," came voices from every side.

On and still on went the camions. Some of them fell by the wayside. Repairs had to be made. Fuel replenished. Some lost their way in the dark, and were late in arriving, but none too late, and then after thirty hours of travel the tired, stiffened men almost fell from their conveyances, stumbled into ranks, and off they marched, company after company, battalion after battalion, out and on into the darkness till their assigned sectors being reached they could fall down in their places and snatch a little rest.

And there across the Paris-Metz road, stretching from Bois de la Marette, through Lucy le Bocage to Bois de Veuilly, these two regiments and one machine-gun battalion of marines waited for the time when the French forces, stubbornly falling back, should pass through their lines to the rear and leave these fresh, practically untried gladiators to take up their struggle against the impending tide—the oncoming flood of Huns.

The most that the French general in high com-

mand hoped for was that these Americans might fight and fall back; stemming the onslaught for sufficient time to allow his war veterans to reorganize, and then again enter the battle. And those were the orders to the commanding general of the 2nd U. S. Division, and passed along to the general of the Fourth Brigade, and handed down to the colonels, the captains, the privates.

"Hold and then fall back! Hold and fall back!" Thus came the words, but—marines may know how to hold, yet in their military lexicon there is no term—"fall back."

CHAPTER V

THE AMERICANS TAKE COMMAND

With the sudden departure from their last training area, life for the marines was made up of stern realities and all that day of June the first the companies, battalions and regiments of the Fourth Brigade were engaged in connecting up their positions in the line; digging their shallow entrenchments for temporary protection; establishing telephonic and runner communication with their various headquarters, and wondering at just what hour the brave *poilus* out in front of them would fall back through their lines and leave the brigade to face the advancing host.

All through that day and the following the roar of the German guns apprised them of the sanguinary conflict, and that roar became more impelling as the long hours crept by. From their positions along the line they were able to follow the course of the barrage as it swept slowly along ahead of the foe, and now a steady line of broken, wounded men kept coming back, receiving medical attention in the American dressing stations along with some

of the marines wounded by shell fire or bombs from German airplanes which continually passed back and forth overhead. In the distance the sausage-like observation balloons of the Prussian forces were seen high up over the trees to their front and it was necessary to keep well concealed else there soon followed a well laid explosion of high-powered projectiles in their midst.

On the extreme left of the line the marines were joined to the French near the Bois de Veuilly and it was near here, south of Hill 142, close to Les Mares Farm that Dick's company found themselves when finally the pressure of the Germans became too great and the tired, wounded, broken, disheartened French filtered through to the rear, and across the open spaces, in close pursuit, came the victory-inflated Huns.

Lying there, watching, waiting, the eager "soldiers of the sea" glimpsed the progress of the first platoons of the hated Boche. Out from a thick wood they tramped, confident—insolent. Already Paris was theirs for the taking. There was naught to stop them. This last break and retreat of the light-blue-clad ranks meant the end of opposition. On to Paris! *Der Tag* was finally at hand, and those first there would reap a wonderful harvest of loot,—of glory.

In perfect order their lines advanced out from

the shade of that baleful wood, out into the sunshine of that June day.

For hours the tired troops had been passing the waiting marines. In French, in broken English, in patois, in real *bona fide* American dialect, they told of the danger following so close at their heels. They shouted words of encouragement which they did not feel; they cheered the waiting ranks with throats parched and choking, for deep down in their hearts they feared that nothing could now avail. None could do more than they had already done.

"They are coming back pretty fast," whispered a boy lying near old Mike Dorlan. "I don't see how there can be many more out there now."

"An' I'll be guessin' them that's still out there won't be comin' back, me lad," said the old soldier, softly. "But when the last av them Frinchies does get through, then this here war's goin' to take a new starrt, for it's us against them Heinies then and no mistake."

"What do you mean by that, Top?"

"Wurrd's just come down the line that our own officers is in charrge and the Commandin' Gin'ral of this here Second Division of the United States Arrmy has taken over the command from the Frinch gin'ral."

"Then we don't have to fall back, like that gen-

eral said we did?" questioned another man who had heard Dorlan's words.

"What—us m'rines 'fall back'? Huh!" and in Mike's voice there was a world of scornful negation, and again he was heard to say, "Who ever heard tell of Uncle Sam's M'rines fallin' back?" With that the old veteran crept away to report to Dick that he had seen the glimmer of German rifles and the shadow of German uniforms on the edge of the woods across the waving fields of wheat to their front.

"Glory be, Captain Dick, but this is goin' to be real, old-fashioned foightin', sir. It's in the open and there ain't no trinches a-cuttin' up of the ground for a feller to be fallin' into and be forever a-gettin' lost in. It's like the good old scrappin' days, sir," and Mike Dorlan's face was wreathed in smiles, as, soon after making his report to Dick, he crouched behind the covering branches of a low, scrubby growth and watched the slow advance of the Germans across the open fields up toward the lines of silent marines waiting for the word of command to begin their telling share in this man's-sized scrap.

All about them the shells were bursting with deadly execution. A few feet behind Dick and Dorlan a "dud"[1] struck the ground with sicken-

[1] A shell which fails to explode on impact.

ing thud. Out over the fields of wheat cottony balls of shrapnel from the American field pieces burst against the blue sky scattering death in their wake. The roar of heavy guns from both sides of the line; the whining of "whizz bangs"; the bee-like buzzing of machine guns; the whirring of German airplanes; the groans of wounded or dying; the dust and dirt where masses of solid earth were thrown high into the air; droning, roaring, blasting, crashing—Inferno!

Would the word never be given to fire? Was this to be a repetition of that memorable day at Bunker's Hill when the unorganized farmers of an embryonic nation were told to hold their fire until they saw the whites of the advancing "redcoats'" eyes?

No, this was not to be like that day, for these marines were armed with a better "fowling piece," and they could hit the "bull's-eye" with assurance at greater distances than those brave colonials ever dreamed of. They were trained fighters here, versed in the arts of war. Cool, collected, deadly in their grim determination.

CHAPTER VI

THE MARINES STOP THE HUNS

"COMMENCE firing!"

Dick Comstock shouted the words in order to make himself heard above the terrible uproar.

"Commence firing! Commence firing!"

Down the line it sped and then followed something which up to this moment had never before been seen on the battlefields of Europe—a company, a battalion, a regiment, a whole brigade of men deliberately setting the sights of their rifles, coolly taking aim, and firing as though they were trying for record scores at paper targets on a peace-time rifle range.

The gray-clad, brownish lines of men felt the impact of that deadly fire. Shrapnel was nothing to it. The sweeping chance of machine-gun sprays was insignificant. The blasting burst of heavy projectiles was child's play compared with this seemingly inhuman, calm, cold-blooded accuracy of aimed fire from those Springfield rifles in the hands of the United States Marines. The lines wavered. They stopped. They turned and ran.

"I told you we'd send 'em back with their tails

between their legs. Fine work, men! Go after them," and Tommy Turner, grabbing up a rifle from one of his own men who had answered the last roll-call, plunged to earth beside the inert body and tearing a clip of cartridges from the near-by bandolier,[1] began taking his toll from the retreating ranks.

"I've helped to repay for you," he whispered into the unheeding ear close to where he lay.

"Stand by! They are reforming, men. Here they come. Give it to 'em again."

And once more the crack of the rifle was the song of death.

Far overhead a French aviator, braving the German supremacy of the air, wonderingly noted this phenomenon, and taking unwarranted but gallant risk he swooped down as close to the marines as he dared, to shout to them his unbounded admiration.

"Bravo! Bravo!" he shouted and then knowing his voice could not be heard he signalled the words, and sailing aloft again he carried back to the artillery far in rear the range they could use to effect the most damage to the enemy.

It must be conceded that those Prussian troops were brave as they came on again, slowly creeping

[1] Extra ammunition was carried in a sort of cloth belt or bag suspended from slings called bandoliers.

forward across that field of death, on and on till again came that shattering fire. The advance again was checked, again it stopped, and again went back.

Quickly the word was sent to the German general in command that the French defense had stiffened, that in some unaccountable manner they were repulsing the Kaiser's chosen shock troops—stopping that scheduled rush to Paris. Another attack was ordered, but nothing could advance in the face of that leaden shower, and for the third time they fell back and now took shelter in the dense tangle of the Wood of Beautiful Water—the *Bois de Belleau*.

"I reckon they don't know what they're up against, Lieutenant," said a marine lying beside Tommy, as this last line of Huns disappeared from whence they came, "and I don't believe they'll be coming back for a bit, do you, sir?"

"I guess not," Tommy replied, proudly. "'Three times and out,' you know."

"Well, sir, seeing that's so, if you don't mind could you give me a hand with this here leg of mine? I reckon it must be busted pretty bad. It's been thataway for some time, but so long's I lie on my stomach it's all right for shooting."

A glance was enough for the young officer. The man was slowly bleeding to death. In a second, with the bayonet from the rifle he was holding, he

ripped open the trouser's leg from hip to puttee legging. A navy hospital corpsman, with his bag of medicaments and first-aid dressings, his own head white-bandaged, a crimson stain darkening it with the red badge of courage, came rushing up in answer to Tommy's shout. Skillfully he applied his tourniquet to stop the further flow of blood. Quickly he bound a temporary splint on the broken leg and with the aid of others the wounded man was borne back to the field dressing stations, now crowded with *blessés* awaiting their turn for treatment, and as the brave marine was carried off he called back:

"Better use my rifle, Lieutenant; it's better than the one you're using, which belonged to poor, old Kingsley, sir."

During the lull which followed the last retreat the lines were straightened but there were now greater distances between the ranks of the marines.

Lieutenant Percy Doyle, hurrying by on his way to report to his captain, called out to Tommy that he, too, was wanted at once, and that young man was soon following in Doyle's footsteps.

"First of all I wish to compliment you both, and in fact the whole company, on your fine work," began Dick enthusiastically. "I rather think the enemy are doing some tall talking right now as to

what has happened, and I feel positive that we marines are the ones to whom must be given the credit for establishing the turning point of this war right here, to-day, but we're not through with it by a long shot."

"I say, Dick, not a German got within a hundred yards of our lines, and you know we didn't have a machine gun up this way to help us. It was all due to the wonderful training,—the time so well spent in teaching our men how to shoot. By jinks! Didn't we pepper 'em? Oh, boy!" cried Tommy.

"Yes, I know, and now we have something else to do. To-morrow they will undoubtedly do everything in their power to get us started in the direction they want us to go, but—oh, well—that's to-morrow. I've just received word from the Regimental P. C. to establish advanced posts to-night and keep those fellows from sneaking up on us in the dark. They'll probably try to do so under cover of the night and dig some of their infernal holes close to our lines and establish machine-gun nests. Over on our left there was an open space which the French filled up for a time, but they didn't think we were holding so they fell back and word has come that the Huns are working around that way now. However, we'll have that hole stopped up with some of the marine companies in reserve, so

the Colonel says, and all we need to worry about is our immediate front."

"They'll probably try to filtrate through us in ones and twos and then tackle us from the rear," said Tommy, impetuously, as Dick was spreading out a map on the ground and poring over it.

"Here is where we are right now," and Dick indicated on the map with the point of his pencil, "and out in front of our line about a hundred yards you will see two slight rises in the ground—in fact, you can see them out there now quite plainly," and he turned to look out over the field, pointing with his finger out in front of the company sector.

The long twilight was beginning to give way to darkness, but Reddy and Tommy were able to distinguish the spots specified.

"We are to establish posts for the night on both of those mounds and we will have patrols out also. The rifle and machine-gun fire seem to be letting up, but I wouldn't be surprised if we got a pretty heavy barrage during the night, and the men would better strengthen their lines as much as they can. Lieutenant Doyle, you will have the right half of that sector and the right advanced post, and Tommy, you will take the left. So go now and get busy with your details. By the time you have them ready it will be dark enough to send the men out in safety, without their being seen. Inciden-

tally our battalion has a number of snipers posted in the Les Mares Farm buildings and your men must be cautioned about it. They know our men are going out. Good luck to you both. I'll be around later to inspect the dispositions you have made of your men."

Not once during this interview did Reddy Doyle vouchsafe any remark or comment, but together with Tommy he saluted and left to set in operation the task allotted him.

"I'll tell you what, Reddy, if we work together on this and arrange signals of some kind we might, perhaps, pick up a few prisoners during the night," said Tommy, as they walked along, forgetting his rancor in the light of bigger things.

"And I'll tell you, Lieutenant Turner, that my name is not 'Reddy,' and furthermore, I can get along perfectly well without fixing up any signals; but of course, if you need assistance in arranging your details I'm willing and ready to help you."

Tommy stopped short in his tracks and faced his companion.

"Well, of all the conceited, red-headed, obstinate donkeys I've ever seen, you take the cake," he spouted forth indignantly; "and ——"

"Lieutenant Turner, I advise you to be more careful with your words, and furthermore, if this

time you don't apologize here and now, I'm going to thrash you well, you insolent puppy."

With each word Doyle spoke he was getting angrier, and talking louder.

Tommy took one withering look at the tormentor of his early boyhood days, and then stepping so close to Reddy that his nose barely missed touching that freckled member of the older man's features, he said:

" If it wasn't for what is threatening us out there in that wood across the way, I'd enjoy nothing better on earth than giving you that chance, Doyle, but we both have other and more important fish to fry than just our own personal grievances, so for the sake of team work, right now, I do apologize and after this fight is all over, I'll repeat what I just said to you. The trouble with you, Doyle, is that you don't know when you are well off," and before the slower witted Doyle had understood that Tommy's apology was really no apology at all, the youngster had gone off to join his section.

" Pretty fresh, I should say! "

Lieutenant Percy Doyle was so startled at the remark seeming to come from the sky over his head that he turned a little pale, for in spite of the roaring and grumbling that was in the air the words were distinctly audible. " Who's there? " he challenged, gazing about him into the gathering shad-

ows. Then his eyes caught sight of the figure of a man blotted against the sky in the branches of a tree directly over his head.

"Come down here," and with his command Reddy whipped out his pistol, pointing it menacingly overhead.

With little trouble the man dropped lightly to the ground, and when he stood at attention before his superior officer, there was something about him which vaguely reminded Reddy of someone he knew or had seen before. He was a medium sized, lithe, active fellow, and as near as Doyle could judge, about thirty-five years of age. His clothing was nondescript, a uniform which might be either army or marine. He was hatless and coatless and in his hand was a rifle. A belt with bayonet and canteen attached was about his waist and two or three bandoliers of ammunition were slung over his shoulders.

"Well, who are you, and what are you doing up in that tree?"

"I'm a marine, sir Lieutenant, attached to the Q. M. D. Couldn't stand it back there with the mules any more, what with shells bursting all around us and no chance to pay back, so I came up here to get in a shot or two on my own account if I could."

"You've no business up here," responded Doyle.

"You get back where you belong. If the rest of your rotten outfit are like you maybe it accounts for the fact that our men are getting nothing to eat but that rotten 'monkey meat'[1] and blamed little of that. What's your name?"

"The same as yours, sir Lieutenant."

"What's that? You say your name is Doyle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where are you from?"

"New York City, sir."

"No, I mean where is your outfit?"

"Oh! I don't just now know, sir. You see I left them yesterday morning way back there somewheres and I've been going on my own ever since."

"How did you get up with the front so quickly?" quizzed Reddy. "Aren't you with the train?"

"Yes, sir, but you see, I came along with the motor section."

Doyle scrutinized the man's face as carefully as he could in the gathering gloom, but it was impossible to tell by his features whether he was lying or not, and in a way he admired the fellow's spirit. His desire to be doing something which seemed more in keeping with a soldier's part than dealing out rations, or as he implied tending the animals,

[1]Australian canned meat. A component of the ration issued the French soldiers.

was not to his discredit certainly, and then, too, his name was Doyle, and that acted as a connecting link of comradeship in a way.

"But I understood you to say you were back with the mules."

"Yes, sir, I did, but I was speaking figuratively, you see, sir," then he paused but in a moment had taken up the talk quickly. "I—I don't know where my outfit is, sir. I'd like to report to you and I know you'll give me a chance to get at those Huns before you turn me over to the M. P., sir."

The contradictions of the man and his vacillating manner between servility one moment and forwardness the next, made the situation rather puzzling to the officer.

"Come along. I guess as long as you are here you might as well fight up on the line with the rest of them, rather than go sniping around here on your own. Besides, you might be mistaking our troops for the enemy if you are not posted."

In the gloom the soldier cast a quick, questioning glance at Doyle, and then he volunteered a remark which effectually changed the subject for the time being.

"That's a pretty fresh kid who was speaking to you a while back, sir. I've had run-ins with him myself. He needs to be taken down a peg or two."

Doyle knew better than to allow the man to talk

in this manner, but his curiosity was piqued, and he made the fatal mistake of discussing Tommy with an enlisted man.

"What has he ever done to you?" he questioned, almost before he knew he had made a sound.

"Oh, several times we've had words since we've been on this side of the ocean," replied the fellow vaguely, and then he added: "He sure has got it in for you, sir. You'll have to watch out for him or he'll do you dirt."

"I guess that will do with that sort of talk," said Reddy, suddenly remembering his position and ashamed to have given way to his curiosity. "Here we are now. I'll turn you over to Sergeant Peterson; he'll see that you get your fill of fighting."

"Just one moment, sir Lieutenant," the man spoke quickly. "If you don't mind, sir, so long as I don't belong to anybody or to any company out here, as it were, couldn't I act as your orderly, or your runner or something like that, sir. You'll excuse my mentioning it again, sir, but I surely did admire the way you called that fresh—I mean I'd like to serve right directly under you, sir, if I might."

For a moment Doyle hesitated. Evidently the man was sincere, and Reddy Doyle was never averse to personal flattery and—"Oh, well, I guess it will be all right for the present; anyway until we

can get the matter straightened out. Sergeant Peterson," he called, " Private Doyle, here, is to be my orderly for the time being. He's attached to this section and under my personal orders."

This matter being arranged satisfactorily and the presence of Private Doyle officially sanctioned, Reddy now set about his delayed preparations for his patrols and outpost. His talk with his new orderly had consumed more time than he had imagined and he already had delayed too long the carrying out of Dick's orders.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST "ALL-AMERICAN" ADVANCE

SHORTLY after eleven o'clock Captain Dick Comstock started out to make his inspection of the sector occupied by his company. In due time he crossed the hundred yards between the lines and the advanced post established by his orders and commanded by Lieutenant Turner. Tommy accompanied Dick through the fields of growing wheat. It was quiet out there—comparatively quiet, when the thunders of the past day's activities were taken into consideration, and as they slowly made their way forward these two friends conversed in an undertone hardly above a whisper.

"Reports from all along our entire line show that we stopped them at every turn, to-day, Tommy."

"Oh, I just knew we could do it, Dick. We may be new to that trench stuff, but when it comes to getting out in the open and doing real he-man fighting, I agree with Old Mike, we can hand it to 'em. But it costs dearly."

"Yes, some of our best men have 'gone West'

to-day, but that must be expected. We can't all escape. Some of us have to give up our lives. A battle for a principle never yet was won without bloodshed; only this war is on a bigger scale than ever before in the history of the world. However, the thing for us to do now is to start a little of this driving business on our own account while they are worried over what we have already done."

"Is there any chance of that—of our making an attack soon, Dick?" questioned Tommy eagerly. "I could hardly keep my men from going over after them to-day when they saw them beating it for cover in such a hurry."

"The chances are more than good," Dick replied; "in fact that's what I've come to tell you about."

"What! We're going over the top—we're going to attack!" Tommy almost shouted, forgetting for the moment the necessity for silence.

"Halt! Who's there?"

"Officers!" answered Dick hastily.

"All right, sir, advance. I recognized your voices anyhow," replied a youthful voice, as a helmeted head appeared rising from the wheat stalks less than five feet in front of them.

Dick found the little advanced post well established and the men on the alert. Out here it was so dark that it became necessary to depend almost

entirely on one's hearing in order to carry on one's duties at all successfully.

"Anything suspicious?" he inquired of Corporal Braden who was awake and on duty at the time.

"Nothing except one of the sentries out in front a ways did think he heard some digging out there a bit ago, but two of us investigated and could find nothing, sir. The field is full of dead Germans—you stumble over 'em in the dark, and it's kinder creepy like, sir."

"Have you arranged any signals with Doyle's outpost?" Dick now asked, turning to Tommy.

"Why—er—no," hesitated that young man, but he added nothing further though it was on the tip of his tongue to tell Dick exactly what had occurred.

"You should have done so," said Dick. "I didn't think it necessary to tell you to, yet it's not too late to remedy that. There are still three or four hours for your men out here. I'm going over to speak to Doyle soon and I'll tell him to fix it up with you at once. Now before I go I'll tell you the plans and orders for to-morrow."

Thereupon followed a talk on the details for the attack which was to take place. The field order had been issued from Brigade Headquarters at 10: 25 that evening and even now many changes were being made in the disposition of the men so

as to bring the companies back under their proper battalion commanders, for during the day's fighting the reserves had often been rushed in to hold or strengthen certain parts of the line, consequently there was now a general shifting about under cover of the darkness. The French, a few days since so downhearted and dismayed, were feeling the effects of the new impetus given to the struggle by the brilliant action of the Second Division in general and the Marine Brigade in particular, and they were relieving certain companies on the flanks of the exceptionally long line which the Americans had defended and held so tenaciously.

"Our company it appears is in its proper position so we won't have to do any hiking around to find new sectors," ended Dick.

"'Glory be,' as Mike would say, but at what hour does the show begin?" inquired Tommy.

"Three forty-five."

"It's too bad they couldn't make it earlier. I'm afraid I might get an overdose of sleep, they are starting so late," responded Tommy.

"Well, I'm afraid, Tommy, that you wouldn't rest well because there is to be a heavy barrage laid down even earlier. Our objective is not far and after we gain it we must hold it because they'll be sure to send over some strong counter attacks. We have our work cut out for us right enough. It

is said the ground ahead is 'loaded to the gunwales' with machine guns. You would better bring back your men by three-thirty without fail. Good-night. I'm off to find Doyle. Good luck, Tommy!" and off the young captain tramped.

He found Doyle taking a little much needed rest back of the line, but Reddy was immediately wide awake on hearing the news which Dick brought, and while Dick was explaining the part Doyle would play in the coming event Private Doyle came up to report that the sergeant in command of Reddy's advanced post desired to see the Lieutenant at once if convenient.

"That reminds me, Doyle, that you and Turner should have arranged some kind of signals for that work out there. It might prove handy, and it's not too late even now to fix it up, so you would better get busy at once."

"But it must be nearly midnight, and as we're going to attack at 3: 45 it hardly seems necessary," objected Reddy.

"Nevertheless, Lieutenant Doyle, you will do so," came the curt reply from Dick.

"I suppose your friend Tommy told you a few tales," sneered Reddy.

"I don't know to what you are referring, Doyle, but if either of you thought of it, as I expected you would, I am surprised you didn't go ahead with

it. Come along; I'll go out with you and see how things are going. Now don't forget the hour the attack begins—remember 3: 45 A. M."

"Are we going to attack, did you say, sir Captain?"

Dick was surprised at the interruption, and looked keenly at the man to learn who he was, but it was too dark to distinguish features.

"Who are you?" he inquired sharply, but before the man could answer Reddy Doyle had spoken for him.

"It's my runner, Captain. I guess he forgot himself, and for the moment his enthusiasm ran away with him," and there was decided indication of annoyance in Doyle's tone and manner.

When Dick, Reddy and the runner Doyle arrived at the outpost Sergeant Peterson came hurrying up, his voice betraying excitement.

"There's a bunch of Germans out in front about twenty-five yards, I believe, and they are digging in," he reported. "We can hear them plainly up at the sentry's post by putting our ears to the ground. I thought it best to report to you before doing anything on my own, sir."

"Send out a patrol at once to make sure, Sergeant," ordered Dick, "and, Doyle, send your runner back to get a few more men out here in case we need them. It may be a fine chance to bag a

few prisoners," but when Percy turned to look for the man Doyle he was not at hand so he despatched another man with the message.

By the time the squad had arrived the patrol sent out to investigate the suspicious noises had returned and reported that as they neared the spot they estimated that about fifteen men were busy in the wheat field near a little mound of stones, preparing a machine-gun nest, but that while the patrol was watching them in order to make sure if possible of their number, for some unknown reason the Germans had picked up their tools and hurried off through the fields toward the distant wood.

"Something must have scared them off, sir," volunteered Private Fuller, who had been in charge of the patrol, "for when we first came upon them they were working away like beavers and just as silent, and then they began talking excitedly and pulled stakes on the double."

Doyle was disappointed. "You men must have been careless and they heard you," he said angrily.

"No, sir, I defy anyone to have heard us, we went so quietly," said Fuller, who was hurt at Doyle's unwarranted accusation, "and we were taking the risk, sir, and more than anxious to get 'em."

"Never mind, Fuller," said Dick, "we will have plenty of other opportunities before the war is over. I'm going back to my P. C. now, Doyle; don't for-

get to make all your arrangements for zero hour," and with that he turned to leave and nearly stumbled over Private Doyle, the new runner.

"Here, where have you been?" asked Dick, who recognized the man, even in the darkness, by his figure.

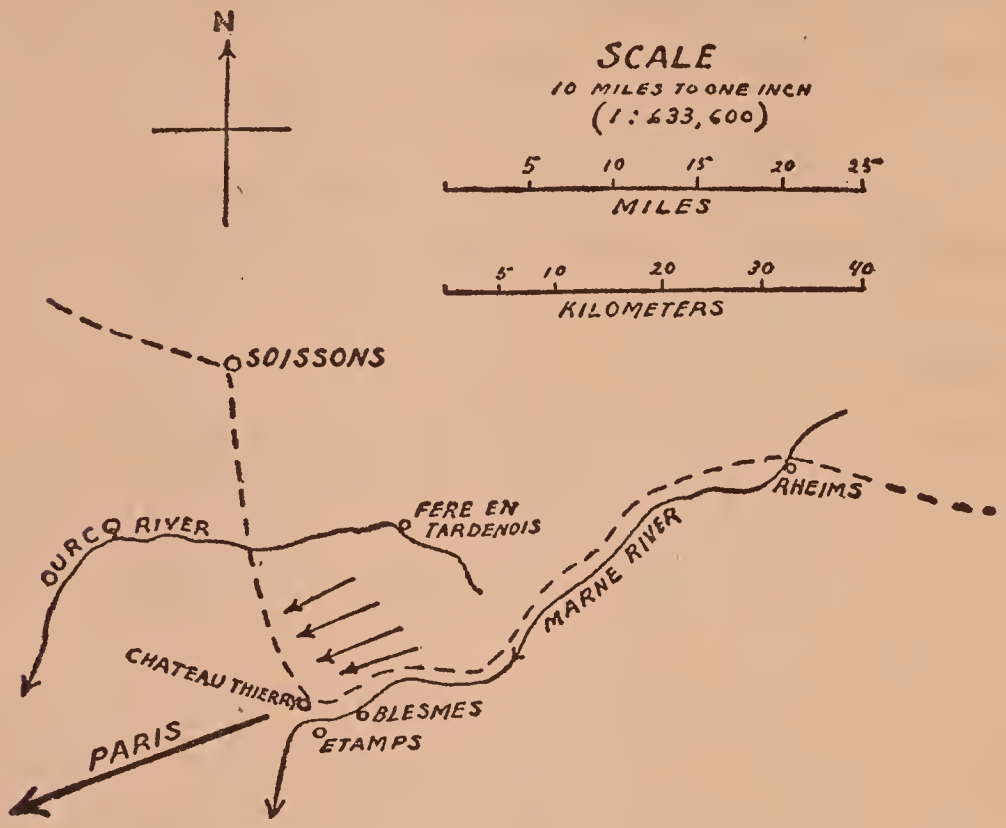
"I just heard that the Lieutenant was calling for me, sir, and I came up on the double," answered the man, pantingly.

"You'd better give this runner of yours some further instructions about being around when he's wanted," said Dick, turning to Reddy, and then he added: "Good-night, and good luck; I'm returning to my P. C."

"Guess he knows it all too," sneered Private Doyle, gazing after Dick's retreating figure, and though Reddy Doyle overheard the remark he made no comment or correction as he should have done. As a matter of fact he was feeling anything but pleased with himself. Angry because the Germans had escaped his men and thereby losing a chance to show Dick that he could ably handle the situation, and also peeved over the orders Dick had given him to do what Tommy Turner had at first suggested as a wise precaution, he forgot to question Doyle where he had been when wanted so badly a few moments before.

Nothing untoward occurred during the rest of

the night, but back of the lines tired marines were moved about from one point to another; taken from here to be placed there, and by three o'clock all was



OURCQ RIVER
CHATEAU THIERRY
BLESMES

ETAMPS
FERE EN TARDENOIS
SOISSONS
RHEIMS

Paris lies in direction of large arrow less than 50 miles distant.

Dotted line represents the wedge the Germans had driven into the Allied lines, and Chateau Thierry is the apex of this wedge.

On June 1st the enemy was advancing rapidly in a south-western direction along the small arrows.

in readiness. Then with renewed vigor the guns of the divisional artillery began their chanting and overhead the shells whirled and screeched. Quickly

the hour for the first wave to advance arrived, and up from their shallow trenches the marines came like spectres, dim and indistinct; out they passed into the field which a few hours before had witnessed the defeat of the advancing Huns.

Slowly they went forward, almost having to feel their way. An hundred yards, and now men stumbled in that field of wheat, dotted by the crimson poppies—stumbled over bodies which possibly their own well-aimed bullets might have caused to lie so still. Dawn was heralded in the east. The chirping song of birds, sharp and penetrating, could be heard above the roar of battle. From the north and northeast the heavens were lighted with the distant flashes of the German guns laying down a counter barrage on the waves of attacking troops. Behind them a continual blare and flash of lightning from the protecting artillery.

The spectres became black shadows, then changed into ghostlike, grayish creatures hurling death from their arms, waving semaphore-like against the purpling horizons. Finally the ghosts became lines of men clad in the winter field of the marines or the olive drab of the army, which latter clothing was gradually being issued to the sea-soldier brigade for the sake of uniformity in the American ranks.

In rear of them, in the town of Lucy le Bocage

the German shells were bursting with inhuman accuracy, and mingled with the high explosives were the shells carrying the mixtures of treacherous gas. Came the warning blare of Claxton horns and before long the men in that portion of the line were wearing the ghoul-like masks. Again the chittering of the machine guns, the sharp explosion of hand grenade and the French V. B.'s, but as a brave accompaniment to all this turmoil came the crack-crack-crack of those Springfield rifles once more.

With cheer and threatening bayonet thrust the marines rushed the lines of the enemy who held out against them. They gained their objectives and began to consolidate their positions, and before eight o'clock the first attack ever made by an American Brigade in the World War had been carried to successful consummation, and though fire of cannon and rifle and *mitrailleuse* still blazed from the newly formed German lines, the marines' task had been done.

During the fight many had been killed and wounded, and many German prisoners had been taken by our forces, also there had been a number of desertions from the enemy's ranks, and these were now tramping back under escort of proud marines to be questioned and cross-questioned at Divisional Headquarters. Ragged and dirty they

were, and badly fed as to food but over fed as to war, these sad looking, erstwhile conquerors.

Yes, it was glorious; but what of the man—your bunkie, whose smiling face was missing at your side?

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAPTURE OF BELLEAU WOOD

"We've got to move to another sector," said Dick to his assembled officers, shortly before noon of the sixth day of June. "The line is to be made stronger by increasing it in depth. We've been fighting over, and holding on to more territory than has been the custom over here, and now another attack has been ordered."

"By jingo," exclaimed Tommy, "the Old Man may not be a regular marine but he's got the marine spirit all right enough."

Reddy Doyle remained silent a moment as his questioning eyes glanced quickly at Tommy on hearing this remark, then he said:

"I take it you are criticising the general of this brigade—an army officer. Do you mean to insinuate that we of the army are usually cowards?"

Before Tommy could reply Dick had interrupted.

"Doyle, I wish you would cease this unwarranted and uncalled for attitude. This is no time for you to permit your personal prejudices, whatever they may be, to interfere with official duties. It is high

time that you forgot some alleged grievances that you appear to have nursed along since our school days, and be man enough to work for the common good, and you can't do that unless your mind is cleared of such tommy-rot. We've not much opportunity to discuss this matter, but if you can tell me and suppose you do, just what it is that either Tommy or I have done to hurt your feelings. If it's a man's reason, Doyle, let's have it right now."

For a second or two Doyle stared at the broken grasses and thrown-up dirt at his feet. He opened his lips as if about to speak, and in another moment the whole matter might have been cleared up, but unfortunately Tommy Turner's impatience became the cloud to obscure the clearing sky.

"Oh, don't waste your time, Dick. Lieutenant Doyle has played this sour-grape rôle for so long that you can't expect ——"

"Shut up, Tommy!" Dick spoke quietly, but Tommy Turner saw a look in his captain's eyes that he had never before seen there and hoped never to see directed at him again. And then Doyle spoke.

"I believe, Captain Comstock, that we all would be better satisfied if it could be arranged for me to be returned to my regiment. However, I will add that you need have no fear but that while I am serving with the marines I shall have their inter-

ests and my country's honor as much at heart as either of you, and ——"

"I'm sure of it, Doyle," said Dick, breaking in.

"—I—well, I must say this," continued Reddy, "I do feel that Lieutenant Turner's derogatory remarks about the general commanding this brigade —an army officer—could not help but be obnoxious to me, and to my mind he should be disciplined rather than condoned. As to the other matters—I prefer not to discuss them."

"As you choose, Doyle," and an impatient frown crossed Dick's forehead; "we will consider the incident closed for the present, and get back to the work in hand. I must caution you that the withdrawal of the company right now is considered a rather ticklish matter because of the German observation balloons. I don't see where that boasted 'supremacy of the air' is which the French and English have been crowing about for so long. It certainly isn't around this neck of the woods."

"Are the orders for the attack issued?" questioned Reddy.

"Yes, we are going to keep rushing them from now on, and give them no rest. That wood over there must be taken before any big advance can be made by us, and those who know say that it's going to be a tough proposition to drive them out of there. We launch our attack at five o'clock this afternoon

and it is the intention of General Harbord to have us take the Bois de Belleau, and the railroad station at Bouresches, which of course means we must also capture the town and Hills 126 and 133, in order to straighten out our lines."

The three officers were now poring over the map which Dick held and whereon he explained in detail the sector limits, the different phases of the coming attack, the duties of each element and their commanding officers.

"On the right and center during the second phase of the battle Colonel Catlin of the Sixth Regiment will command," said Dick, "and on the left Lieutenant Colonel Feland of the Fifth Marines will have direct charge. Marine machine-gun companies are to support us and the artillery preparation is under the orders of the commanding general of the Second U. S. Field Artillery Brigade, which laid down that fine barrage early this morning. A battalion of marines, less one company, is stationed in the woods right here, just northwest of Lucy le Bocage, as the brigade reserve. Now do you get it all?" he finished, and both Tommy and Doyle nodded silently.

Dick folded up his map and returned it to his dispatch case. Five minutes later the company was being withdrawn, and in a short time was safely marching to its new position at about the center of

the brigade, nearly opposite the southwestern point of the Bois de Belleau.

During the march Dick, finding himself near Doyle, walked beside him for a time, hoping to break Reddy's uncompromising attitude, if possible, by pleasant conversation.

"What happened to that runner of yours, Doyle? I didn't fully recognize the man in the dark last night. What was his name?"

"He wasn't a member of the company. Just a straggler from the Q. M. D., so he claimed. I found him up a tree potting away at the Germans on his own, early in the evening. Said he couldn't stand it to have fighting so near and not get mixed up in it. He didn't know where his outfit was so I took him with me and used him as my runner for the time being. After the attack this morning he wasn't to be found. Possibly he was killed or wounded; anyway he's missing."

"What did you say his name was?"

"Doyle," replied Reddy, briefly.

"Never heard of him," said Dick, "but that isn't strange in a brigade the size of these modern war affairs, especially with replacement troops coming up all the time. It's hard enough keeping up with my own company as it is."

A little silence followed Dick's remark, then Reddy asked:

"Didn't it seem to you that when we made our attack this morning the enemy appeared to be surprisingly on the alert right at zero hour?"

"We did appear to get it a bit heavy," Dick answered. "I remember remarking on it at the time but until now I hadn't thought of it again." Then after a short pause, he added: "Why?"

"Oh, nothing," said Reddy. "I was thinking the same thing, that's all," but he added beneath his breath, "However, I'm looking for one Private Doyle, Q. M. D., also a map and a pair of prismatic binoculars belonging to a lieutenant of the same name, and if I ever run across him he'll need some help, let me tell you."

After reaching their designated place in the line, it was not long before the men of Dick's company were huddled down behind the slight embankments which were doing duty as a precarious shelter from frontal fire of machine gun and rifle bullets.

Slowly the minutes crept by and as the hour approached the faces of the men grew more and more tense. Muscles twitched involuntarily. Sinewy hands grasped with crushing force the weapons they held, while across No Man's Land, eyes stared fixedly. Occasionally there would break forth a strained, nervous laugh, but almost immediately followed an added compression of the lips. Nerv-

ous fingers sought waist-belts which somehow seemed to need tightening.

Again the chorus of the artillery barking—thundering its message, and again the undertoning buzz of the smaller calibre weapons. Officers glanced at their watches, trying to appear calm, though inside their breasts there was a strange feeling of tautness. Their eyes never wavered from the minute hand of their timepieces, for in each attack every watch is synchronized so that there may be no mistaking the crucial hour—none to advance fatally before the time set, none as fatally to stay behind.

"Five minutes!" "Three minutes!" "One minute!" "Zero!"

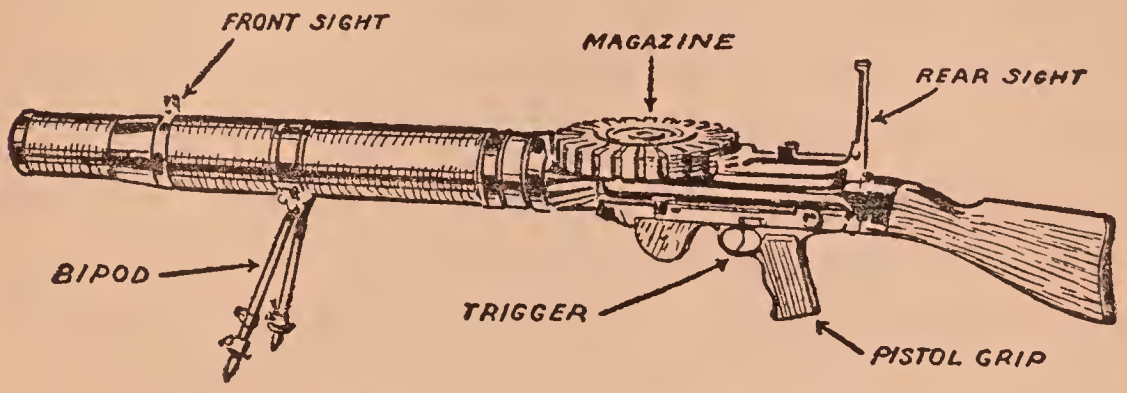
With each announcement the waiting warriors seemed to bend forward a fraction more. They looked like statues of stone—like bloodhounds straining at their leash—like the sprinter crouching behind the starting line waiting the crack of the pistol—like the tiger measuring the distance to the prey for his final spring. Then came the word:

"Forward."

Quickly on their feet, from behind the low embankments, they answered the summons, out into the open went the first wave. Now they no longer felt the horrible strain but moved slowly, keeping

their lines dressed as though on parade or drill. Action had finally broken the soul-testing strain of anticipation.

Out with the first wave went Tommy Turner. About fifty yards from their starting point the enemy began pouring into their ranks a murderous



A Lewis Machine Gun on its bipod field mount.

machine-gun fire. It seemed to sweep the stalks of wheat like a scythe, a foot from the ground. Men were falling rapidly now, and yet in that blast of leaden bullets there were men who were miraculously unharmed, undaunted, and steadily the first wave continued on toward its goal. Behind them came the second wave—then the third wave of living men, to dash against the barrier of Belleau Wood.

Ahead of him, Tommy could see the trembling leaves on tangled brier and bush. Far up in the sky, just touched by the last rays of the declining sun, the green foliage of the higher trees looked dark and forboding within its depths. The very

earth on which he trod was shaken—the air reverberated with Titan blasts.

Though the artillery preparation had been excellent, the German gunners, deeply hidden among the ugly ledges of rock and boulder, behind interlacing brier and bough, had constructed their nests with fiendish cleverness, and with the raising of the barrage, as the attacking forces drew near the wood, each separate group had come from hiding to man their guns; to climb the trees and high in the sheltering branches pick off these stubborn troops opposing them and, for the time being, holding up their scheduled advance.

"The first wave's reached the wood, Misther Dick," yelled Dorlan into his captain's ear.

The old fellow made it a point to be as close to Captain Richard Comstock as his duties would permit. In fact, Old Mike regarded Dick almost in the light of a son, and his devotion, though sometimes embarrassing, was always understood and appreciated. In the early days of Dick's career, Sergeant Dorlan's good advice had saved the recruit from many a pitfall set for the unwary, and to be near "his bye," the veteran had twice refused temporary commissions in the corps.

As Dorlan had said, the first wave was now at the edge of the wood, but there it seemed to hesitate. Apparently the fire of the hidden guns was hold-

ing it back for the moment. Dick could see his lieutenant as he urged his men to advance and then he saw the youngster, waving over his head a light stick which he carried, charge into the shadows, his men following, their cheers heard above the din of battle.

Now the second wave had disappeared in the wake of the first, but their ranks were thinning pitifully. Men were falling here, there, everywhere along the line. A more thunderous rattle from the woods and back to its edge the shattered remains of the first two waves were forced. Here they stopped, taking shelter behind rocks, tufts of grass, trunks of trees, bits of shrub, but they held on.

"Come on, men, we must carry that line through the woods," shouted Dick, and across the open space the men of the third wave raced, firing as they went, their bayonets glistening in the evening glow.

Off to his right Dick saw Doyle, his hat off, his red hair flaming like a warning beacon, standing in the open and in defiance of the flying storm of steel and lead, directing his section—pointing out the position of snipers hidden in the tree tops. Tommy Turner was nowhere in sight.

"Them woods is filled with machine guns and Heinies, sir," sang out Sergeant Peterson as Dick reached the shelter of a small gully.

"We must drive them out," repeated Dick. "If we can't shoot 'em out, then chase 'em out with the bayonet. Come on!"

"Hooray, byes!" came Dorlan's bellowing voice. "This is the koind of foightin' for us m'rines. Give the Heinies the p'int of yer bay'nits! Club 'em over the head! Come on, ye'll never do it sittin' back there in the gallery," and the old veteran plunged ahead.

"Me for an orchestra seat," hoarsely yelled a mere boy, whose face was bleeding from a cut of which he was wholly unconscious, received at the beginning of the advance.

Mike Dorlan's enthusiasm was contagious.

"There's one of them nests right ahead of us, Capt'in."

"Charge it, men!"

And followed by Dorlan and a half dozen intrepid marines Dick scrambled forward, tripping over trailing vines, stumbling over hidden rocks; breaking through networks of wire and vine he sprang up the broken face of embankment, and there at the top, with pointed pistol, he stood, breathless but threatening, over a dozen Germans who, at the sight of these wild, ferocious fighters, became appalled and dismayed. Death stared them in the face, death which they had been dealing out so liberally and chucklingly from behind their com-

paratively safe shelter. Now the tables were turned.

"Kamerad! Kamerad!" they cried, and the sweat poured down their pulpy, white faces.

"Make these fellows prisoners! Disarm them! Come on, we must take the next one! Here, Brown and Horner, turn that gun around and get those rats beating it away out there among that thick cluster of bushes. See them? There they go! Hurry, or they'll get away!"

In a flash the guns were turned and trained on the fleeing enemy.

Now the fighting had become little whirlwind centers. It was like unto the days of the old Roman wars when each man singled out his opponent and fought him till one or the other lost. Here there was no order of things. Men vied with one another to rush forward into the hot breaths of the German-wielded guns. They dashed intrepidly up to the very muzzles and tore them away with their bare hands. The blood lust was in them! They took few prisoners! It was gruesome! It was terrible! It was war!

Off to the left a higher mound than the others continued to belch forth sheets of flame. The gunners were sticking to their posts grimly. Already word had passed among their ranks that the Americans did not take prisoners. They might as well

fight then to the bitter end. It was death no matter what they attempted.

As Dick's eyes quickly took in the scene about him this one particular spot caught his attention. He hardly knew which way to turn. In the mêlée some men had advanced much farther than others. It was difficult to tell from whence came the greatest danger.

Again his glance swept the rocky ledge and the ground directly in front of the spattering machine guns. While he looked a man seemed to pull himself from out of the very earth by clinging to a slender sapling. It was Tommy Turner, his coat sleeve ripped from wrist to shoulder; the right arm hanging limply at his side, though bandaged, was useless.

As the youngster rose, from a corner of his eye Dick caught sight of a man in the trees overhead bending low and pointing his rifle at Tommy. For a second the face appeared familiar, then realizing what was about to happen, Dick gave a warning cry, whipped his pistol to the firing position and the report of the two weapons was simultaneous. He saw the sniper's body catapult from the tree and fall to the earth with a crashing of boughs and a sickening thud.

And now he looked again for Tommy. Evidently the sniper's bullet, too, had found its mark,

for the boy was writhing about on the ground, tearing at his side with his left hand and even the injured right arm waved futilely about as if to assist.

Dick waited to see no more; with a roar of anger he dashed across the intervening yards to Tommy's aid, and even as he ran he saw the brave young officer suddenly rise to his knees and with a loud "Take that, you swine," he threw his empty Colt's pistol at the head of a German who was peering over the parapet to see if this one of the enemy had received the *coup de grace*.[1] Then as Tommy was about to sprawl, face downward on the ground, strong arms were about him, and in another second Dick was carrying him back to shelter as though the lad were but a mere babe in arms, and even as Dick was turning away with his burden, Reddy Doyle, alone and in the face of the murderous fire, rushed forward and captured single handed the gunners who were about to turn their weapons on his captain who was bearing off his unconscious friend.

Dick had seen enough of the fight in the woods to know that brave as were the marines, they could not long stand the losses inflicted on them as they essayed their heroic attacks against the entrenched German gunners. With each bristling nest taken

[1]A shot delivered to insure the death of a condemned person when executed by musketry.

there was a fearful toll paid, and to insure ultimate success something more was necessary to prevent this needless sacrifice of human life. Stokes mortars were needed, and hand grenades must be provided if the marines ever hoped to win through that fearful place with even a remnant of the brigade alive.

Not a bullet had grazed Dick all this time. It seemed as though he carried some charm that protected him from the impending dangers which were, nevertheless, just as real to him. He had gone about fifty yards when he stumbled into a gully where a number of marines were taking momentary refuge from the hail of bullets.

"Here, some of you, hurry Lieutenant Turner back to the first dressing station you can find. His life may depend on your quickness," he shouted, and as willing hands reached forward to bear Tommy away, he muttered a fervent little prayer for the boy's life, then turning to the rest in the group he called for volunteers to take the dangerous route across the open fields, carrying back a message of the extreme need for the grenades and mortars. Nor did he lack for runners to take their lives in their hands in this emergency. From the dozen who offered, he picked two men whom he knew well and sent them off, then with the remainder of the men following him he was again

returning to where the fight was still raging, feeling that possibly he should not have left that seething turmoil even for the sake of this dearest of friends.

Back at Brigade Headquarters the messages were coming from all the different parts of the attacking lines. They came by telephone, by wireless, by runners on foot, by motorcyclists, by messages dropped from allied aeroplanes. Some clear and intelligible, some broken and unconnected, some absolutely meaningless, but all together making up the history of this memorable struggle.

At one point a section was far in advance of those to its right and left and it was necessary to retire them in order to safeguard the flanks, which were, in military parlance, "in the air" or unprotected and open to attack. Now came word that the colonel of the Sixth Regiment was dangerously wounded by a sniper's bullet. That Bouresches had been taken by a depleted section of one company. That the Germans held the railroad and station on the northeast outskirts of the town. That certain parts of the line could not hold out longer unless help was sent. That the French said the town of Torcy was in the hands of the marines. Then, that the report was denied. That the French on the left had not taken their designated objectives. Casualties were appalling everywhere.

Prisoners were being sent back. Wounded men straggled by, some carried on stretchers,—wounded helping wounded. The artillery was asked to cor-

rect their range; it was endangering the lives of our own men. Requests came to have certain areas shelled, designated by coördinates taken from the map in use of the country. The call for hand grenades and Stokes mortars was being answered. A French aeroplane had crashed to earth in the

enemy's lines. Gas shells were being used. Fire, smoke, flash, thunder, clatter, rattle!

Would the turmoil never cease?

On through the night came the reports. On through the morning of the next day, and the next, and the next. Engineers of the army attached to the brigade were rushed forward to help straighten out the lines and strengthen those objectives already gained. And in the heart of Belleau Wood the marines advanced and halted, fought and swore, bled and died. Gaining little by little. Surging to the fore. Doing Herculanean tasks.

Such acts of individual gallantry as were performed under those swaying tree tops, dressed in their gallant spring verdure!

Now came another day, and another. A week; —nearly a month passed.

Fifty batteries of artillery dropped their explosive iron messengers into a last bit of that famous wood. All the night long they blazed and roared. The forest trees were stripped of their branches. The leaves were swept from the twigs. Great trunks were torn up by the roots or splintered into bundles of giant toothpicks. The ground was torn up as with some hitherto unknown Cyclopean plough, and then with the first streak of dawn the waiting, seemingly tireless marines charged into the mass of débris, and from underground hiding-

places, from behind rock and rut, drove the last Boches from their positions.

Belleau Wood was captured!

It was completely in the hands of the United States Marines.

Vaguely the tired, dazed gladiators rubbed their eyes.

"What day of the month is it, Misther Dick?" asked Mike Dorlan, while he scratched, in any but an heroic manner, at his scrubby, gray growth of beard.

"I don't know, Mike. Haven't an idea."

"Are we going out, sir? Are we going to be relieved?" queried Sergeant Peterson, his eyes staring out from under his shaggy brows, reminding one of two sparks of fire set far back in twin caverns of darkness.

"Yes, orders just came. We are to be relieved at once," answered Dick, dully. It seemed to him as though he would fall asleep and never awake if he dared for one moment to permit his own eyes to close.

"Then all I kin say is, that we had better be a-movin' mighty quick, sir, or there'll be a foiner bunch av Rip Van Winkles lyin' around this here wood than Misther Washin'ton Irvin' ever seen in his whole loife," announced Dorlan. "Hey, there, rookie!" and he called to a marine whose head was

even then nodding back and forth while the man struggled to keep awake. "I say, me lad, you know the dates of all the wars back to that of Cain and Abel, what day of the month does this one happen to be?"

"June twenty-seventh, Sarge," answered the man, without opening his eyes.

Twenty-seven days of such fighting as few troops in any war has ever withstood! Twenty-seven days with no baths, little food, less sleep, and at such a fearful cost! Driving back the most famous shock troops of the German army. Ending their dream of conquering not only Paris but the rest of the world, which these sea-soldier, leather-necked marines of Uncle Sam had made impossible to them for all time to come.

Thanks to *le Bon Dieu!*

CHAPTER IX

REDDY WINS A BITTER VICTORY

THE part played by the Marine Brigade in the Battle of Belleau Wood "set the world on fire." For the first time in history, citizens of nearly every country on the face of the globe, including North America, became eager to learn about this hitherto practically unknown branch of the United States' armed forces. From all sides poured in congratulatory telegrams and letters, words of praise, and every conceivable honor and credit was bestowed upon these heroes who were now as modest in their glory as during the past weeks they had been forward in their fighting.

"Begorra, Misther Dick, the old Corps's finally come to its app'inted place in the sun," smiled Mike Dorlan, as he approached his captain about the second day of July.

At this time the company was located in a sheltering wood near the Paris-Metz Road not far from the town of Lucy le Bocage, enjoying a short respite from the front lines.

"Look at this dockyment, sir, and it'll be makin' yer chest swell to bustin', I'm thinkin'."

Dick took the paper from Dorlan's outstretched hand. It was the copy of an order written in French with its English translation below, signed on the 30th of June by no less a person than General Degoutte, commanding the Sixth French Army, in which he ordered that the name of Bois de Belleau be changed, and in all official orders from that date forward it should be called the " Bois de la Brigade de Marine," because of the brilliant conduct of the Fourth Brigade of the Second Division of the United States Army during those trying days just passed.

" I call that pretty fine, Mike, and it shows what our sacrifices mean to these people. Where did you get this copy? "

" Oh, I was a-strollin' over to Headquarters and havin' a chin with a couple of me old pals there," replied Dorlan, " and let me tell—the place is filled with newspaper corry-spondents and gin'rals and telly-grams, and palaverin'. It'd set ye crazy. There's all koinds of talk goin' around. 'Tis said that them Frinchies are goin' to decorate the regimental colors of the Fifth and Sixth, and also the Sixth Machine Gun Battalion, and all the lads that fought with the old Fourth Brigade will be a-wearin' of them frog-ger-ries,—or whatever ye call them dooflickets what ye see draped over the left shoulders of so manny of the ' froggies.' "

"That's great news," said Dick, "and of course it includes everyone who was fighting with us at the time," and he glanced at Lieutenant Doyle, sitting near by, who was trying not to appear too much interested in the conversation. "I say, Doyle, did you hear what First Sergeant Dorlan says? We're all to be honored by the French Government and will wear the fourragere. The regimental colors are to be decorated and ——"

"And that's not all the news, Misther Dick," interrupted Mike. "'Tis said the hull kit and kaboodle of us is goin' up to little ol' Paree and parade over the city on the Fourth of July, and there's to be high doin's."

"Hooray!" cried Dick. "Perhaps we can see Tommy Turner and ——" but before he finished he heard Doyle remarking to Dorlan:

"We'll make a pretty sight—parading through Paris in our present condition of dirt and destitution, but if they can stand it, I guess I can," but the speaker looked disparagingly at his torn and muddy clothes which for one solid month he, like unto the majority of others about him, had been unable to change or to wash.

That most of the first sergeant's news was true was soon borne out by facts, but to the disappointment of all hands it was found that only a thousand marines would take part in the triumphant parade

on which the French people insisted in order to view for their own satisfaction these fighters who had saved their beautiful city from the ruthless hands of the Germans.

Thus it happened that here and there along the trenches where the fighting still was at fever heat; and in the reserve areas where shell still burst with disastrous results at times;—from Bouresches, through the Bois de la Brigade de Marine to Vaux, officers, non-coms and privates finally drew lots to see who would take part in the coming memorable trip, and tramp before the admiring eyes—yes, adoring eyes, of a grateful nation.

As luck would have it when the officers of Dick's company drew their precious bits of paper, Reddy Doyle was fated to remain behind, and although Dick, who had won, whole-heartedly offered to allow Doyle to go in his stead, his suggestion was instantly and scornfully rejected.

Ever since that day when the marines had entered on their strenuous task, Doyle had shown none of his former sulkiness and Dick had hoped that the close intimacy engendered and fostered by the dangers and perils borne so bravely by them all would continue to the end, but now he saw evidence of its recurrence.

Reddy's work during the daily fighting had been wonderful, and Dick had officially recommended

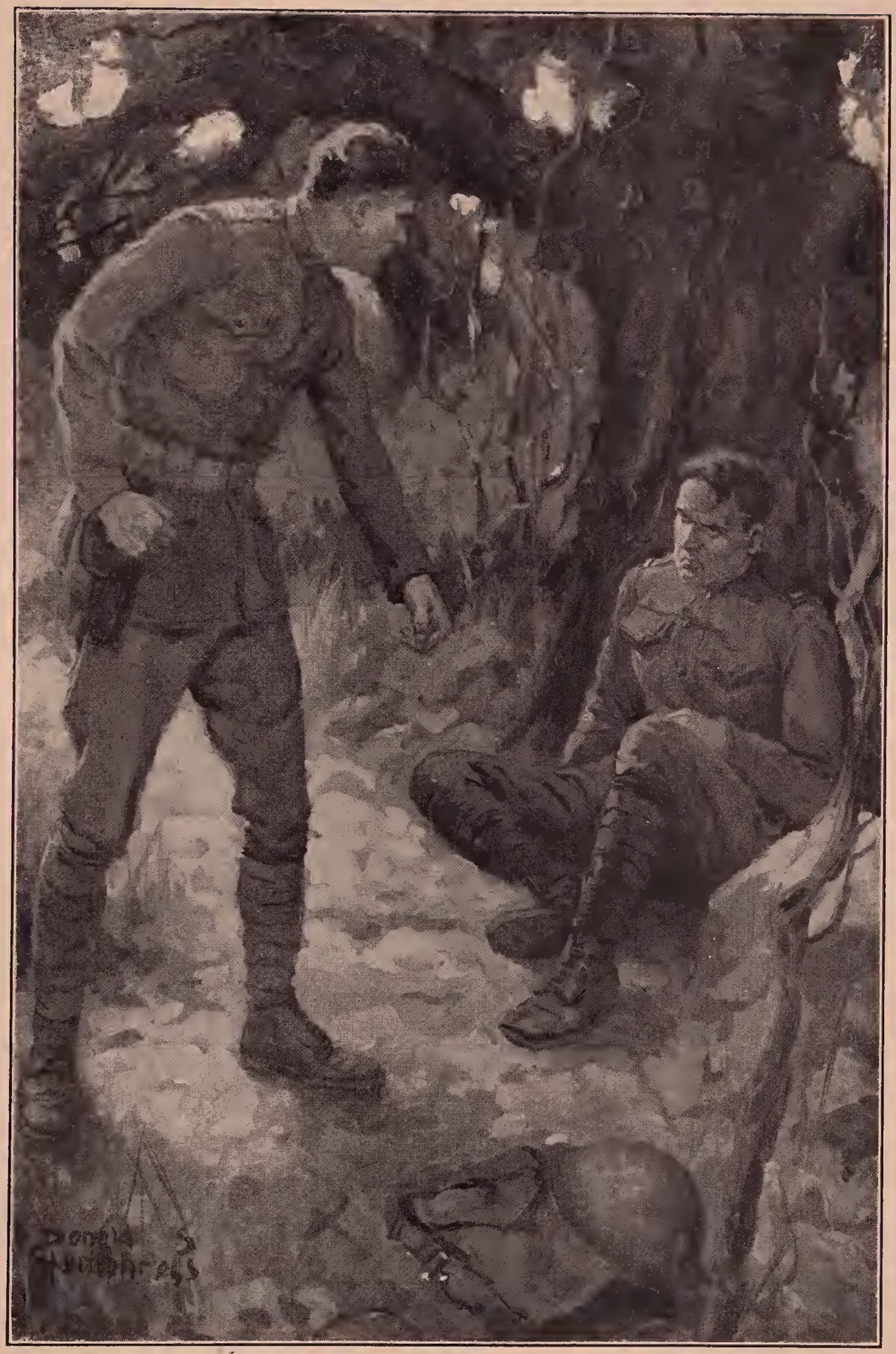
Doyle to his superior officers on several occasions, the most notable being the taking of that machine-gun nest single handed the day Tommy was so seriously wounded, which act in all probability saved both his own and Tommy's life.

It had cost Dick a great deal to make his generous offer, for he was particularly anxious to go to Paris, as both his sister and Marie Faure, with whom Ursula had journeyed to France as early as 1913 to study art, were at this time on duty in a hospital in the city where Tommy was now a patient, and to be turned down so cavalierly made him feel in any but a kindly mood.

"You might be a bit more circumspect in your refusal, Doyle," he had flashed.

"Pardon me, Captain Comstock, but when it is so plain that you took advantage of your position as commanding officer in order to draw that lucky slip, you can hardly expect me to believe that your offer now is in the least sincere—unless, of course, you are 'playing the grandstand.'"

The insult of Doyle's words and manner was so great that for a moment Dick could scarcely believe he had heard aright. When Dick made his offer the two of them had already strolled away from the vicinity of the men and were seated under a tree not far from the highway. There was no one to overhear their conversation—no one in sight.



DICK SPRANG TO HIS FEET AND GLARED AT DOYLE

When the full import of Doyle's accusation seared its way to Dick's brain, it found the gray matter there was as fiery as Doyle's hair was brilliant red. Without a second thought Dick sprang to his feet and glared at Doyle.

"Get up here, you—you—hound!" and the words came clipped and dangerously cool. "You've gone too far this time. Apologies won't answer. Get up, I tell you!"

But Doyle still sat nonchalantly with his back to the tree.

"So at last I've gotten under your hide and touched you on the raw, have I?" he slurred. "It hurts, doesn't it?"

By now Dick was boiling. He waited to hear no more, but bending over with the swiftness and strength of a lion he grabbed his defamer by the shirt collar, dragged him to his feet, and then lightly as a cat playing with a mouse, he swept his open palm across Doyle's face.

"Fight with your fists like a man and not with your tongue," he said, stepping back a few feet, for even in his extreme anger the youth's innate spirit of square dealing would not permit him to attack his opponent without fair warning.

"You bet I'll fight with my fists," came the reply, accompanied by an oath, and Reddy Doyle, knowing Dick of old, advanced rapidly but warily,

to the encounter. As he came on, his shock of hair seemed to stand up in waves of red bristles, and all the accumulated bitterness and hatred of many years was in his voice and face and bearing.

There was a time when Dick Comstock had been considered as among the cleverest men with the gloves in the whole Atlantic Fleet and he had often carried away the honors for the old Corps and his former ship, the *Denver,* while the naval force was assembled at its winter headquarters in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; but for the past few years he had done little boxing. However, he was never in better condition in many ways than on this day when his lifelong rival advanced toward him, with fists doubled and eyes fixed and determined. Both of them had forgotten entirely the greater battle even then in progress but a few kilometers away. Both had been through many days of horror. Physically and mentally weary, their nerves were nearly at the breaking point, and no more unfortunate time could have been found than this present, when reason and common sense were so liable to fly off at tangent on the slightest provocation.

Regarding the question of being equally matched, there was probably not a pound's difference as to weight, and what Doyle lacked in height, was more than compensated for by his excessive arm reach, and too, Doyle had done more work in

the "squared circle" of late years than had Dick. He was hailed as the champion heavy-weight of a well-known Athletic Club of New York City, in which metropolis he was engaged in business when war was declared.

Once before Reddy had fought a fistic battle with Dick—on the day of their graduation from Bankley High School, and he had been signally defeated on that occasion, although his opponent had by no means escaped unscathed and without a hard tussle. Now, however, Reddy felt confident of victory and advanced willingly to the encounter.

Crouching low he launched his attack swiftly, hoping by his sudden spring to beat down immediately Dick's guard and gain a speedy decision. But such was not to be, for Dick, expert in footwork, side stepped the rush easily, escaped Doyle's swinging blows and then stepping in at exactly the right moment had driven his left fist into the freckled, malignant face and barely missed landing another telling blow with his right.

The jar of that blow cleared Doyle's brain, and he settled down to his work. In another minute he found that Dick knew much more about the art of boxing than he had ever gained during his high school days, and do as Doyle would he found it impossible to place a telling blow on Dick's face. There were no rounds in this fight. The seconds

and minutes flew by, perspiration streamed from the fighters' faces, while their breathing was becoming more and more labored.

With each passing moment Dick was realizing to what straits his hasty action had brought them. He realized, too late, that he should have curbed his temper, hard as it would have been to do so, and also he knew that even now he should stop fighting; that his action was the more reprehensible,—he was the superior officer. Yet the two fighters continued to circle about each other, looking for some favorable opening. They watched each the other warily, but what they did not see was the stealthy gathering of the men of the company, forming a wide ring about them, yet always managing to keep behind tree or bush and out of plain view. These unbidden spectators talked in low undertones and with each quick blow, each clever block or counter, each lightning punch or swing or supper cut, their eyes glistened in silent admiration of this unexpected and really wonderful exhibition of the manly art.

Suddenly with clever generalship, Doyle shifted his tactics and began raining heavy blows on Dick's body, hoping to "get his wind" as the saying is, and Dick, who was now becoming more and more disgusted with himself at being embroiled in such an affair, suffered for his preoccupation.

"Somebody ought to call time on 'em," suggested one of the spectators.

"They'll be killing themselves if they keep up that pace," muttered another. "They must o' been goin' to it for more'n fifteen minutes now."

"Wonder what they're fighting about, anyhow?"

"Dunno, but I do know they ain't been the best of friends, ever."

"Oh, you mean that school-kid stuff some of the fellers was talking about?"

"Yes—Golly, did you see that set-to? If the Old Man had been a bit quicker he'd 'a' finished that Red-Head."

"P'raps; but say, bo, the Old Man can take punishment, anyhow! Did you see Doyle get in them two jolts just above the belt? He'll be getting the Captain's wind in a minute if he lands many more like that—and, by Jiminy-crickets,—the Captain's down! Doyle fetched him one plumb on the point of the jaw."

The blow that knocked Dick out laid him flat on his back and for several seconds he lost consciousness, while over him stood Doyle, his knees shaking weakly, but the light of triumph strong in his eyes.

"I beat you—fair and square—at last—Dick Comstock," he gasped, as his bloodshot eyes looked

down on the unconscious man. "It—pays—for all this—for all these years—that you've held the upper hand."

"Come on, let's beat it, while our shoes are good," whispered the awed and silent audience, and they went as they had come—stealthily and unobserved.

Now Reddy's shaking, trembling hands felt tenderly of his swollen face, where several bruises and small cuts gave evidence of blows received. Then he staggered a little and sat down heavily near his fallen opponent.

Again he glanced at his old schoolmate, and as he looked a change came over him—sudden—unaccountable. From somewhere a new train of thought sprang into birth in his weary brain, and he mumbled his thoughts, half aloud—disjointed—disconnected:

"Why can't I like Dick? He's always been popular—always had the best fellows backing him.—He's no coward.—He knows how to fight. He's a better and squarer fighter than I am.—I wonder if I haven't always been just plain jealous."

Dick's eyes were slowly opening. "Are you all right?" questioned Doyle, looking at Dick with a new interest, a new feeling born of the past fight and the present moment. "Are you all right, Dick?"

With a supreme effort Dick managed to sit up. His head seemed like a top, it was still spinning around so fast. Finally he spoke.

"I'll see what I can do to effect your immediate transfer, Lieutenant Doyle," was his irrelevant answer, and with that Reddy arose and made his way toward the camp. There had been a quality in Dick's voice which told him plainly than any solicitation on his part was decidedly obnoxious, and that furthermore there was nothing to be said which could undo the words already spoken.

Arriving at his billet he made such repairs to his face as the means at hand permitted, for nothing but time could efface the effects of those blows he had received. He remembered now that the only blow he had succeeded in placing on Dick's face was that final one which had laid him out. Somehow he was glad of it. Somehow he would have been sorry to see Dick appearing before his men with his face all battered up by his, Doyle's, heavy fist.

"I look like the one licked," he said grimly, "and the worst of it is I feel like it, too—in here," and he struck his sore chest with his clenched and aching knuckles.

"Orders for ye, sir!"

It was the voice of First Sergeant Dorlan outside the little shelter which for the moment Doyle

called "home." He reached out to get the paper and saw Dorlan's curious eyes taking in his condition, but he offered no explanation. "I can't find the Capt'in, sir, and wurrd has come that there's a motorcycle a-waitin' for ye to go at once," added Dorlan.

"I'll be ready in a minute," said Doyle, "and —er—er—wait a second, Dorlan, I want to shake hands with you and wish you, your captain, your company, and your corps the best luck in the world. And thanks for all the help you've given me—you don't know how much, Dorlan. Good-bye, or better yet, *au revoir,* old chap," and then he read the telegram in his hand.

"Detached from further service with U. S. Marine Corps. Report immediately to your former regiment."

"I guess Dick must have been a mind reader or something like that," he said aloud, as he began packing his few belongings; "at any rate, now that I'm detached, darned if I don't just hate to go. That's always the way, so it seems to me: you long for a thing to beat the band, and then finally when you get it you no more want it than a dog wants fleas."

Another five minutes and Reddy Doyle had made his adieus to such men in the company as came to the road to see him start off, and was chug-

chugging away to another part of the battle line. He did not see Dick before leaving, but heard that Dick had been called to Brigade Headquarters so, just as Reddy climbed into the side car, seeing Dorlan standing to one side of the road, he called him over and said:

"Mike, tell Captain Comstock for me that I thank him for all he has taught me and his many kindnesses, will you, and say also that I am sorry to leave the outfit, and ——" but a strange something came up in Doyle's throat just then, something he had never known of before, and with a nod to the driver of the vehicle, he gave the signal for the starting. For the life of him he could not have said another word.

The little group of men gave three hearty cheers, for they were really regretful at his departure; they all knew his sterling worth as a fighter both on the line as well as behind it.

Twenty hours later, Reddy unpacked his kit and was engaged in putting his belongings in order; he missed a little packet of letters which he had received while serving with the marines—letters from his home town and filled with the intimate bits of news which former associates had sent him believing they might prove of interest, but search as he would the compact, little bundle was not to be found.

"I wonder what's become of it?" he thought, scowlingly. "I don't suppose it can do as much harm as I've done with this long tongue of mine. I always did talk too much for my own or anyone else's good. I see it now and I'd give a lot to recall some of the things I've said."

He paused for a while, lost in deep and unpleasant thoughts, then he burst out angrily:

"Gee whizz! Why in thunder couldn't I have licked Dick to a frazzle years ago—it would have made a better man of me all the way through."

CHAPTER X

THE FOURTH OF JULY

"I SAY, Marie, did you ever hear of such bum luck in all your life?" and Tommy Turner, well on the road to recovery, gazed indignantly from his reclining position in a wheeled chair up into the blue eyes of the black-haired little nurse who was trundling him along a wide corridor toward the elevator which would carry them to the first floor of the hospital. They were on their way out into the wonderful sunshine of that July day, honored and revered by all true Americans, no matter what their environment—The Glorious Fourth.

"What is the trouble, Tommy? Anything gone especially wrong to-day? Did you happen to get powdered sugar on your eggs this morning instead of salt? If so your disposition should be by that much the sweeter," answered Marie Faure, cleverly guiding the chair through the elevator door.

"Wrong?—Of course something's gone wrong! Here it is the Fourth of July, and in ten minutes a thousand marines will be parading past us while all the world and his brother turn out to give them the glad hand, and back up there," he nodded

vaguely in a direction which might have been toward Fijiland, for all he cared, "back up there a couple of thousand more of 'em are still scrapping away for dear life—and what of me, I'd like to know?"

"Well,—what of you? Aren't you getting well much faster than the surgeons thought possible, and in a few more weeks, perhaps, you may be convalesced back home, to the dear old States. I should say that you are pretty hard to satisfy."

"Oh, of course you would, but you're a girl. Why—hang it all!—do you think I enjoy lying around this repair factory like a broken doll with a leg and arm busted, when I might just as well as not be following that band of ours under the Arc de Triomphe, or peppering hot lead into the Heinies. Why in thunder do I always get knocked down and out when there's really something big going on? It makes me tired! I no sooner get started scrapping those poor dubs when along comes some kind of a fool shell, or a bullet, or a piece of mud, which bowls me over as though I were a round-bottomed tenpin. Look at that lucky dog, Dick Comstock, for instance ——"

"Yes, and what of Dick?" but the slow words belied the interest which sparkled in the blue eyes at the mention of the name, and a dancing dimple flashed in either cheek for the fraction of a second.

"Why, he never gets hurt! He's got the hind foot of a graveyard rabbit or—or something, stowed away in his jeans, let me tell! And now, darn it all, Ursula says he's going to get a Croix de Guerre for pulling me—pulling me, mind you, out of that infernal wood, and ——"

"But Tommy, don't you want Dick to get a Croix de Guerre? He probably saved your life, you know," and the little nurse's eyes opened very wide, and possibly for a single second they might have glared at the invalid.

"Of course I want him to get it, but don't you see all the fun I used to have crowing over him because I had one of those gadgets myself, which I got for that no-account stunt I did down Verdun way, is all ended now? That was the only ribbon I had, and though Dick's got oodles of 'em, he didn't have one like mine. Now the party's all off! I don't see why they couldn't have given him a D. S. C. and let me still be happy for a while. Huh! someone's always taking the joy out of life!" and the youngster gave a kick with his good leg at the blanket tucked about him, as if he really meant all he said.

"Ah! I see now what you mean," and the smile was back again; "but Tommy, Ursula told me this morning that he is going to get the Distinguished Service Cross too—that some high-up army officer

told her so, last evening. Dick doesn't know of it though, and she is not to tell him."

"Is that so?"

In his excitement over the good news, Tommy almost sat straight up in his chair, which thoughtless act caused a spasm of pain to cross his mobile features and left a black scowl behind. Nurse Marie was manœuvring a difficult turn at the time so failed to notice the start, having her eyes fixed on the swinging door which she held open with one foot, but when she finally saw the look on her patient's face she really did misinterpret the cause, and to Tommy's amazement, instead of sympathizing with him, the blue eyes grew very dark and he found that they could flash as angrily as any eyes he ever saw. She stopped the progress of the chair and stared at the youth for a full minute, while the door knocked unheeded against one of the wheels, then in a scornful, bitter tone, she said:

"If that is the way you feel, Lieutenant Turner, I believe I will ask your regular nurse to look out for you for the rest of the day."

"Now, what in the world's the matter with you?" exclaimed the stunned Tommy. "Gosh! When I give my fool side a wrench like that haven't I any rights at all? Can't I even scowl, instead of crying as I've a perfect mind to do?"

"Oh, forgive me, Tommy," and Marie was all

solicitations once more. "I did not know—you see —I thought—why ——"

"You thought I was angry because Dick was going to get the D. S. C., eh? Well, you ought to know by this time, Marie Faure, that according to my way of thinking, there's nothing on this little old globe that's too good for him, and, as for you, —well, I'm going to recite something to you which a famous English statesman is quoted as having said. It's a bit of mixed metaphor, but I guess you'll get me. It goes like this: 'Mr. Speaker, I smell a rat, I see him brewing in the air: but, mark me, I shall yet nip him in the bud;' now, Miss, I'll not do any nipping 'in the bud' business, but if you aren't pertickler nice to me from this day furr'd, I'll 'be for tellin' on ye to Misther Dick,' as our mutual friend, Mike Dorlan, might say."

"I'm truly sorry you hurt your side, Tommy," and out into the sunshine went the wheeled chair, an invalid marine and a blushing nurse.

Not far from the hospital a spot had been reserved from which such patients as were able might view the passing of the "Saviours of Paris," and soon Tommy and Marie were in positions of vantage where they were joined in a short time by Ursula Comstock who happened to be off duty at this enviable hour. With each passing moment the vacant spaces were rapidly filling, and then from

far up the beautiful avenue came the sound of martial music, the tramp of marching feet.

"They are here!"

"Where? Oh, yes, I can see them. How the bayonets flash!"

"Here they come! Hurrah!"

"Vive l' Infanterie de la Marine! Vive les Etats-Unis! Vive l'Amerique!"

The murmur became a roar. The roar became a thunderous sound as of mighty waves sweeping into great caverns of the sea, there to dash in reverberating grandeur against hollow, drum-like walls.

And then, following close behind this barrage of human voices, they came—swinging to the rhythm of the strains of the marines' own march—that famous composition of John Philip Sousa's—"Semper Fidelis."

Tommy Turner's face glowed with unstifled pride. His heart seemed to swell to the bursting point, nor could he ever understand why it did not "bust." With one especially good left hand and a steadily-growing-stronger right, he gripped the covering blanket with all his might—to keep back the tears. He did not know why he wanted to cry, but he just did, and for some unknown reason he longed to feel his mother's arms around him—just for a minute or two.

Ah! was there ever anything as beautiful as this sight? Was there ever a Triumph of the Roman Emperors so wonderful as this tribute from a thankful nation to those comrades out there?

On they came, those thousand leather-necks, looking neither to the right nor left, and now Ursula's throat seemed suddenly to choke, and the tears—happy, grateful tears, welling unbidden to her eyes, dimmed yet magnified those strong, straight-backed, stalwart, fearless men. Was not her brother also one of these?

Rank after rank, file behind file, was passing them. From every side flowers rained along their pathway, flung by thousands of childish hands, making a variegated rug beneath their feet which rivaled in design and color the most famous Bokhara or Persian; and as she gazed eagerly at each officer marching along with battalion, or company, or platoon, Marie Faure wondered if *he* would be there. The girl's face had paled to whiteness, and in her graceful throat the telltale pulsing of her heart's metronome quickened with each successive disappointment. Why, surely Dick must be there —they could not leave *him* behind—the Triumph would not be complete without—Yes—There he marched ——

"Dick! Dick! Hurrah for the marines!" and her rich voice rang out over the sea of seething life

before her. And now Tommy and Ursula had spied him!

"Dick! Dick Comstock! Hooray! Hooray for Dick Comstock!"

The people near them took up the cry, with a great rolling of r's and lengthening of the vowels.

"Hoo-r-r-r-a-ay for Deek Coomstook! Hoo-r-r-r-a-ay!"

Then Dick heard it. What could it mean? Why should he be singled out in this Parisian throng? Why should his name be called aloud by the crowds? He glanced at the lines of men behind him. His eyes swept the multitude of faces along the sidewalks, and then, forgetful of years of military training, he waved frantically toward the fascinating little group which caught his eye, and going as near as he dared without leaving the ranks he called aloud to them, but his voice was lost in the clamor. At last these gloating onlookers knew one of their heroes by name, and Dick's voice was drowned beneath their cheers.

"Halt! Rest!"

The marching columns halted in their tracks as the words came down from the head of the leading element; and then it was that Dame Fortune played to the gallery. In another minute Ursula was in her brother's arms, crying and laughing in a breath, and Tommy Turner was shaking him by

the one hand; Marie by the other. The fever was catching, for that ebullient crowd needed but a cue as to their next means of expressing their unbounded appreciation. There was a rush of skirts —a flying of high-heeled shoes across the pavements,—a flinging of arms, and the veterans of the Wood of Beautiful Water were being soundly and properly kissed whether they would or no.

For some, the command to march came all too soon; for some—a very bashful minority—it came too late.

"Fall in! Fall in! Come on there, stop that kissin'."

"Here, fellers, save me!"

"Hey, someone tell this girl in French to beat it!"

"Fall in, there! Eyes to the front!"

"Au revoir. I'll be back at the hospital as soon as we are dismissed," called Dick.

A bugle blared!

"Forward march!"

Martial music from far ahead. Again the tramp and tread of the marching feet! again the rhythmic swing of the marching men, the glinting flash of a thousand bayonets.

"Vive les Marines! Vive Deek Coomstook! Vive!"

Soon after, Marie and Ursula, having waited till

the last man had passed, together hurried their invalid back to the quiet hospital, chattering like magpies as they joyously made their way, and later when they had greeted Dick and escorted him to Tommy's bedside, they left the two friends for a little while.

"There's all kinds of news," said Dick, in answer to Tommy's questioning, "but you must stop this useless worrying, Tommy," and he put a quiet hand on the other's shoulder. "You see, it will merely retard your recovery; that's all there is to it. If you wish to serve the corps best you can do it only by getting well."

"But Dick, how in the world do y' expect I can keep still with all this excitement going on. You say we're on our way to Berlin, and then think I can lie here like a pussy-cat and purr peacefully, knowing all the time that I'm losing out."

"Yes, but if you want to get to Berlin with the rest of us, old dear, it's up to you to get well first. You must know we don't expect to get up there to-morrow, nor for some weeks of 'to-morrows,' so if you put as much energy into the 'road to recovery' business as you do in most things I'll bet you'll be in that parade down the main street of the village with the best of us."

"I'll try, Dickie, but it's going to be 'sumpin'

turribul.' Now tell me all about the brigade, and is it true that Harbord is to be promoted, and that General Lejeune of 'ours' is on his way to France and going to command us? I've heard all these rumors, but I want some facts."

"Well, your rumors are all facts, Tommy, and I guess you get all the dope down here before we get it up there, and furthermore, it's probably a lot more reliable."

"Didn't I tell you that we marines would make our brigade commander a Major-General? Didn't I? Didn't we?"

"You—we did," laughed Dick, "and the 'Old Man' deserves it, too."

"Of course he does, and I'm mighty glad of it, and now we must do the same thing for our own man. When do they expect him?"

"Don't know; but there is another rumor that Harbord will keep command of the Second Division, so he'll still be with us. Now, to drop from generals to lesser lights; you may be interested to know that Reddy Doyle has rejoined his regiment. Went a couple of days ago."

"Never heard such good news in all my life, Dick. He has always rubbed me the wrong way, and I've heard, too, that he started a lot of mean stories about you in the company. I guess he must have started them because no one but he would

know about some of the tales he flirted around so freely."

"Forget them, Tommy, and remember what he did to those Huns in that machine-gun nest, for if he hadn't, neither one of us might be talking here right now."

"I didn't know about that. Tell me." And Tommy listened with interest to Dick's recital.

"You say that you have recommended him for a D. S. C.?"

"Yes," answered Dick, "and the French are going to give him a Croix de Guerre for some one of his other brave stunts during the past month of scrapping. Really, Tommy, you've no idea what a man he is when he forgets Percy Doyle for a while."

"Incidentally there's a chap in this pleasure palace who says his name is Doyle, or at least he did say so when he was going under anæsthetic for an operation, but since then he's said so durned little that they are beginning to think his brain has gone wrong. He claims to have been mixed up in the fighting with our company that first night and says, too, that he was a runner for Reddy."

"Yes, I know him—that is, I saw him that night, but I never would be able to recognize him; it was too dark."

"But there was no one in our company named Doyle except Reddy."

"No, he didn't belong to us. A straggler from the Q. M. D., so Doyle told me ——"

"A marine from our Q. M. D.?" questioned Tommy.

"Why, of course."

"He doesn't tell the same story twice then, for he now says he's from some army bunch but cannot remember which. Marie and Ursula both know the fellow, and they say that there is something suspicious about him—at least the surgeons here seem to be rather interested in his case, and it's not because of any surgical interest either. He claims he's still very ill, but as a matter of fact he's as right as a trivet, if you happen to know what that is. The girls say he is malingering."

Marie and Ursula returning at this moment changed, for the time being, the trend of the conversation.

"Now, Marie," began Tommy, a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, "I believe I'll tell Dick about the conversation we had a bit ago regarding rats ——"

"Time to take your temperature, Lieutenant Turner," said Marie, placing a slim glass tube beneath the squirming Tommy's tongue, and holding his wrist with professional severity. "No—no talking—and please don't bite that thermometer in two. You might swallow the mercury and ——"

"I—don't—have—to ——" began Tommy, mumbling badly as the tube rattled around in his mouth.

"You do have to or else I'll ask your visitor to leave. You've had enough excitement for one day, anyhow, and your pulse is dangerously high," responded the girl, turning her head slightly to wink roguishly at Ursula, then casting a quick side glance at Dick she found his eyes fixed on her inquiringly.

"What about the rats, Marie?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing! Some foolishness on the part of my patient. An aftermath of war, I'm afraid. He appears still to retain the odor of a certain variety of rodent in his nostrils. Possibly one of his trench pets. An alarming symptom in a way. Besides he's talked too much to-day as it is," at which remark Tommy shook his head in violent negation while his lips pressed tightly on the tube.

"What are the people doing for the men, Dick? And how in the world does it happen that you could find a thousand men so clean and dressed up after all you have been through?" now inquired Ursula.

"To answer the last question first, I'll tell you that yesterday when we all assembled at the rendezvous back of the lines we found the Quartermaster there with truck loads of clothing and he fitted out everyone. It didn't much matter what

size one asked for, one merely took the clothes handed over and trusted in luck and the guesswork of the Q. M. that they'd fit. I tell you there was some high finance in swapping about in order to get anywhere near right. And, Tommy," said Dick, turning toward the invalid, " there was a river near by and you should have seen the rush made to get into that stream. I don't believe a thousand men ever got undressed quicker in the history of the world. Why, there were clothes flying in all directions,—that is some persons might have dignified them by that name. I don't believe I ever really enjoyed a swim and a scrub before in my whole life as I did that one. Think of it—really immersed up to one's neck in real, honest-to-goodness, clean water! "

Tommy rolled his eyes expressively.

" As to what the men are doing now," continued Dick, " I can't tell you, but I do know that for once in their lives, Marines can't spend a cent of their own money in France—or at least in Paris. Everything they desire is being handed them to-day on a silver platter. To-night there's to be a big banquet for the whole lot of them, and as one of the men said: ' There's goin' to be a Paris peach on either side of every man, 'n' music, 'n' dancin', 'n' everything.' "

" Tommy tells me that Reddy Doyle has been

attached to your company, Dick, for the past month," said Ursula. "I do hope you got along all right with him."

"Well—as right as might be expected, Sis, but you know Doyle, and ——"

"I hope you didn't have any more fights, Dick," and Ursula smiled in recollection of a day many years ago when she had repaired the badly bruised eye of her brother.

"We're too old for that," answered Dick, noncommittally.

"But you did fight, Dick," spoke up Marie.

"What makes you believe that?" queried Dick.

"Oh, I saw it in your eyes," she answered, busily wiping off the thermometer with a bit of alcohol-dipped gauze.

"I'll bet you licked him to a fare-you-well," gloated Tommy, his tongue at last released.

"And I'll bet you I didn't, and I'm glad I didn't, too," came Dick's surprising reply; but Marie, now sorry to have her particular hero forced to acknowledge defeat and all because of her thoughtless remarks, hastened to change the subject.

"There's a man in the next ward whose name is Doyle," she said. "He says he fought in your company, Dick, and with Lieutenant Doyle that first night at Belleau Wood, and also the next day in the woods itself."

"You mean to say he was in the next ward, Marie," spoke Ursula. "Perhaps you didn't know it, but he has been under suspicion for some time and this morning he was found missing. The head nurse told me a few minutes ago that he is thought to be a German and got in here—picked up with our wounded, by mistake. He had on part of a marine and an army uniform. Anyway, he's not to be found and the authorities have been notified."

"I wonder why Reddy was protecting that fellow?" thought Dick to himself, and for the rest of the day and evening that same question was ever recurring.

A day later found the thousand heroes back in their places along the battle front, and the preparations for the Ainse-Marne offensive were occupying the minds of the United States troops and their allies.

CHAPTER XI

DICK'S STRANGE ADVENTURE IN BELGIUM

SLUSH; slush! Slop; slop!

The lines of men plodding wearily along through the forests north of Villers-Cotterets, slid and slipped, stumbled and fumbled in the wet, sticky clay of many roads leading toward the east. Overhead gray, heavy-laden rain-clouds prevented the German air squadrons from seeing the gathering of the great armies which were concentrating by means of forced night marches, and which were destined finally to start the enemy on his retreat to Berlin.

"Whew," said Sergeant Peterson, trudging stolidly along in the wake of Old Mike Dorlan, "it's a lucky thing they gave us orders to drop the long pack[1] back there a ways or this downpour would have made 'em heavier 'n lead by now."

"Um-m-m-ph!" grunted Mike, as he adjusted his helmet at another angle in the hope that the rain might find a less uncomfortable place to stream down his back.

[1] The packs carried by the men were easily arranged to detach the lower and heavier part when necessary.

But Peterson was feeling lonely and he wanted to converse with someone, so he continued:

"Why in the name of Old Glory don't the powers that be pick out a road upon which we can really march? I'm tired of skidding along on my ear in this infernal ditch while the artillery and the tanks have the right of way all the time. What they need in this congestion is a Broadway traffic cop to straighten things out and give everybody a chance at the good going."

"Um-m-m-ph!"

"Marching single file may have been all right for the old-time American Indian, but it's all wrong when it comes to the modern product, and I'm blessed if I don't believe this is the first time in history they ever marched divisions of infantry in single file to reach the front or wherever it is we're going. Why, we must be strung out for a thousand miles! If the head of this column ever reaches camp the tail of it won't be able to get up until the millennium. For once I've had enough marching, both as to length and to time occupied."

"I reckon we've had about enough of everything 'cept food," spoke up a man in rear, "and goodness knows we've had little enough of that. Besides being tired to death, I'm starved to death."

"Go to it, me lads," burst forth Old Mike with a

chuckle. "The more ye growls the better ye'll foight."

"So you're awake, are you, Mike? I began to believe you'd gone to sleep—all except your legs. It's not so dark but that I can see they're moving, that and the fact that I haven't bumped into you."

"I'm awake, never fear about that, me lad. And as for bumpin' into me—well, I've yet to see anny spalpeen in the comp'ny that kin put it over me in spite of me age and ailments. I was merely a-thinkin' about what we've got ahead of us and the task we fellers has got to do. You see, old Gin'ral Foch is goin' back to first principles in this here attack what's to be starrted in the mornin'. It's what I've said should 'a' been done all along,—but then I'm no gin'ral!"

"Ye-a, and what is that?"

"In the first place—Moind yer eye in rear! Here's a whoppin' big hole in the middle of the ditch. Pass the wurrd behind ye. Now as I was sayin', in the first place the Frinchies is gettin' the proper idea regarrdin' us American foighters, and the gin'ral got the loan of us two divisions, the Second and the First, from Gin'ral Pershing, and he brought along that First Moroccan Division from his own arrmy for this special stunt he's goin' to pull off, and in the second place he's arranged so there ain't goin' to be no preliminary barraage to give 'em

anny warnin', but when it comes toime to 'jump-off'—out we go with a rollin' barraage keepin' a hundred meters ahead of us, and them Heinies is goin' to be taken by surprise, or I miss me reck-onin'."

"That's the best dope I've heard yet," responded Peterson, "and everything is working in our favor all right. This heavy forest of beeches conceals our movements—why, you could hide a hundred armies in it—and their airmen haven't a chance in the world to spot us through those low-lying, rain-soaked clouds overhead. Now that I know the reason for it all, why to thunder, I say, with the difficulties encountered in getting to the jumping-off place."

"Yes, that's gin'rally the way with human nature as a rule," said Mike. "I'm a great believer in lettin' men know the reason for things, and it does away with a lot of growlin'; but on the other hand, as I said before, a moderate amount of growls gin'rally gets 'em in good foightin' trim, and sometoimes it needs a Napoleon to discrimmynaate as to the best dope to hand out."

And tired, dirty, muddy, though those two divisions of Uncle Sam's troops—of which the Fourth Brigade of Marines was a vital factor—and the famous Moroccan division of the French were, they did the task assigned to them. The attack was

a complete surprise. The advance was victorious throughout, and in their "game-bag," so to speak, at the end of the battle were 3,000 prisoners, sixty-six pieces of heavy ordnance, 100 machine guns, numbers of minnewerfers, and tons of supplies and ammunition.

Captain Dick Comstock's company played a prominent part in the general plan, but Dick found himself wishing many times for his friend Tommy and he was surprised to discover how much he missed the familiar figure and flaming hair of Reddy Doyle. New officers had reported to him to replace the existing vacancies and as each day of battle meant the loss of more men to his company, he found it quite difficult to keep up with the constantly arriving replacements. He hardly knew one-sixth of his company now.

Soon after this battle of July 18–19, Brigadier-General John A. Lejeune, of the United States Marine Corps, assumed command of the brigade, only to find a few days later that he had been promoted to Major-General and in turn he replaced Harbord in command of the Second Division, whereupon Colonel Wendell C. Neville, also of the Marines, promoted to Brigadier, had the honor of leading the sea-soldiers through their subsequent victories.

That they were victories was undisputed, for

from now on the German war lords knew that the flood tide of their supremacy in military prowess, power and prestige had passed, the tide was on the ebb, and each passing day brought proof of that fact home to them with bitter poignancy.

But why describe these battles, the thought of which brings to many so much sadness and sorrow? Suffice it to say that the St. Mihiel offensive in which the famous brigade took part followed in due course of time, and then came that wonderful battle of Blanc Mont Ridge—" the key of all the German defenses of this sector including the whole Rheims massif." This is what General Gouraud called it when General Lejeune visited his headquarters on September 27, 1918.

" Do you think your division could effect its capture, General? " asked the French officer of the marine.

" I feel certain of it," was the prompt reply, and thereupon the American was told to make his preparations accordingly, for he would be given the opportunity to prove his assertion.

Between October 3rd and 9th, that Second Division as a unit of the Fourth Army of France demonstrated to the full the general's faith in it. It seized the ridge and then advanced beyond, and although both flanks were " in the air " it held every inch of its ground, and as a result the entire battle

line of the Germans was forced to retreat hastily for distances varying from twenty to twenty-five miles. The losses inflicted on the invaders were appalling.

On the right and left of the Second Division, the French armies carried on the fighting, but it was the unparalleled attack of the Americans which made the advance of the others a possibility. The Blanc Mont Ridge was a mass of concrete fortifications, a maze of trenches; it was pitted and scarred with deep shell craters made by nearly four years of continuous artillery duels; it was a cobweb of barbed wire and pitfalls, and there were counter attacks to contend with,—fierce, desperate encounters, but still the gallant Second held all they had gained.

In the meantime, Tommy Turner had resolutely refused to be sent back to the United States. Instead he insisted on being allowed to rejoin his company and his arrival was just before the Meuse-Argonne offensive was brought to its close. This part of the operations was begun on September 26th resulting in another advance of thirty kilometers for the allied forces, and found the marines across the River Meuse and in complete possession of the high ground from which the Germans had been driven. This crossing of the Meuse had been accomplished in the face of withering and concen-

trated gun fire of the enemy, but now the resistance of the foe was beaten down and crushed, never to rise again.

With this last victory came the cringing of the hitherto vainglorious, high-handed Hun. Seeing that his props were cut from beneath him he loudly cried for mercy, and on the " eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year 1918 " hostilities ceased, and the Germans began the withdrawal of their cowering armies. Close behind them followed the allied troops who were to insure they did not delay nor stop their ignominious retirement.

By the terms of the armistice the Germans must go back even farther than their original starting point—they must retire across the River Rhine, which was their natural boundary line on the west, and along this famous stream the victorious troops would keep watch and ward at every important point on its high and picturesque banks and even patrol its waters until the treaty of peace was finally signed in Paris.

" I've got me fill of foightin', Misther Tommy, but bedad, we let them scoundrels off too aisy, sir. Turn the tables around and see how much they'd be for givin' of us, sir."

" I agree with you, Mike, but it was done solely from a humanitarian standpoint. They knew, we

knew, and the world knew they were licked and ——"

"Then why not play the man's part instead of yelpin' loike a lot of yaller mongrels? No, Misther Tommy, we shouldn't have listened to 'em, sir. I may be old and gettin' tired of it, but I've yet got a lot of foight still left in me, begorra."

"But think of the lives which would needlessly be wasted, Mike."

"Yes, I'm thinkin' av them that was uselessly wasted by them sons of Huns—I'm thinkin' of them innocent wimmen and the jolly little kiddies they've murthered in cold blood in Belgium and France. I'm thinkin' of the ——"

"I know, Mike, I know and deep down in my heart—yes, I guess in the hearts of each and every one of us if the truth were told, we wanted to keep it up, but—well, we are no longer supposed to be barbarians, and if we had 'carried on' and chased them back, ruining their cities, devastating their homes—then we would have put ourselves on their level. We would have lost sight of the principle, to uphold which we entered the war."

"Misther Tommy, the Irish in me don't be for admittin' of principles under such conditions, and when foightin' with the loikes of such hy-e-nees." And many there are who agree with old Dorlan.

Out of France, across Belgium to the River

Rhine went the defeated, and how different was their reception from those long-suffering people, over whom for four weary years they had held such despotic sway. Behind them, brooking no delay, marched the armies of France and Belgium, Britain and America, and with the last named came the famous shock troops of Uncle Sam, whose valor had done so much within the last six months to pile ignominy on the foe. As a part of this conquering and occupying force came the Fourth Brigade of Marines, now world famous, and with that brigade marched Dick Comstock, Tommy Turner and Mike Dorlan. And they enjoyed that march more than any other part of their varied experiences in the World War.

" It's worth a lifetoime of harrd knocks to see the joy of them freed people," remarked Mike.

One evening as the head of the column was approaching a little Belgian village a surprise awaited them. The Fifth Regiment of Marines happened to be leading the column that day and some miles from the town the entire population headed by a band composed of citizens met them, and behind the blatant blare of horn and clash of cymbals of these grateful enthusiasts they were escorted into the center of the town as conquering heroes should have been.

The billeting officer on this occasion was none

other than Tommy Turner, but all his work went for naught. The inhabitants waited for no assignments to billets, for as the soldiery entered the confines of their district they fairly shoved the marines into their homes and put them to bed in the best rooms in their houses. It was no use to protest,—father, mother, eldest sister and little son took a hand in the capture. There was no escaping their welcome importunities, nor was there any active resistance on the part of the tired marchers.

"I believe I'll be returning to this place the first furlough I get, Mike," said Sergeant Peterson the following morning after the same band had escorted the troops well on their way. "Although I had the best bed and the most tempting one I ever gazed on in my whole life, I didn't any more than get a squint at it. You see, I was up all night."

"Uh-huh! I see ye was," came the reply. "And if I'm not bein' mistaken ye was strollin' around the plaza wid that pretty little Belgian gurrl dawdling on yer arrm as if 'twas a medal of honor ye was a-wearin'."

"She was and is, Mike. That's why I'm coming back—in order to carry that sweet little medal of honor back to God's country with me."

"Yes? And how did ye talk with the colleen, me

lad?" questioned the old sergeant with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Oh, we didn't have to do much talking, Mike!"

"No? Well, I'll be guessin' ye didn't, and as for that, for all me old eyes could see, the majority of the regiment is in the same boat with ye."

He paused for a while and then added:

"And I'll be tellin' av a secret to ye, me lad,—for onct in me loife I was tempted to take up the study of this here Belgian langwidge, meself."

The following night they reached their stopping place just as the last of the Germans were leaving on the far side of the town. Fast as were the Kaiser's troops in their going, they had to be continually spurred. No longer was there an incentive to stir them as was the case when, victorious, they strode on, rough-shod, in their rush to Paris.

Tommy was again billeting officer and in his assignments he managed so that Dick and he should occupy the same dwelling for the night.

A conference kept them up rather late and before turning in they strolled around the principal streets, but as nearly everyone had retired they found no amusement worthy the name, so returned to their billets. As they quietly entered the house, Dick's attention was attracted by the sound of voices from one of the rooms on the ground floor.

In the early part of the evening he had noticed

that Monsieur Flammeau's daughter was an exceedingly attractive girl and although he had not spoken with her he had heard her voice and he at once recognized her as one of the speakers. The other voice, from the lower grumble, was that of a man. He would have thought nothing further of the matter, but as he stepped on the stairs the sound of a scuffle from behind the closed door came to his ears and then followed a woman's scream, muffled almost at once, as though a stifling hand had been roughly placed over the girl's mouth.

The scuffle and scream made him pause for a moment, but no action suggested itself to his mind although he intuitively felt that something was amiss. At the same time, he was not positive and he did not feel that he had any right to interfere in the family affairs of these strangers. For all he knew it might prove to be nothing more than some domestic dispute, in which case interference would both be unwelcome and uncalled for under most circumstances.

Tommy, now at the head of the stairway, turned to see why Dick was delaying and at that moment the noise was renewed and there was a frantic pounding on the paneling of the door. Dick hesitated no longer. With a bound he was at the door, trying to open it. Evidently it was locked on the opposite side as it would not budge an inch.

The pounding had ceased and the persons had swung away from the door toward the center of the room. Again he heard a sobbing call from the girl. Again the muffling stifled it and the struggle within continued. By now Tommy had reached his side and was asking the cause of the excitement.

"Don't know," answered Dick. "Beat it outside and see if you can get in through the windows."

There was nothing in sight in the hallway with which to break down the door, so with a short rush Dick rammed his shoulder against the panel nearest the lock. The stout board crashed inward sufficiently to allow him to run his arm through the opening and turn the key in the lock. In another moment he was in the room.

By the dim light he saw Mademoiselle Flammeau sitting on the floor in the center of the room. She was breathless, but otherwise apparently unharmed, though her dress was torn about the shoulders and her long, black hair was in disorder. An open door at the far end of the compartment showed the route which the other occupant had taken in his flight and in a second Dick was rushing through the kitchen out into the courtyard in pursuit. As he reached the yard he saw a man struggle to the top of the high enclosing wall at the back and drop from sight on the other side. As the

fellow squirmed over the obstacle some letters and papers dropped to the flagstones below.

Pursuit was out of the question. Dick did not know the town at all, and to go chasing through the maze of dark alleys would have been of little use. He believed that possibly the papers might be of some value so he carefully gathered the letters and loose sheets together and put them in his pocket. He then returned to the house, closing and locking the kitchen door behind him.

He found no one in the front room but Tommy Turner.

"Where is the girl, Tommy?"

"Gone up-stairs. She has hardly left the room. You see, I went outside as you told me, but the wooden shutters were up and you can scarcely see a ray of light through them. When I came back, Mademoiselle was getting up from the floor. I offered to assist her, as she seemed to be all in, but say, she's some haughty piece of furniture; she fairly hissed at me like a snake would and said, 'Keep your hands away from me. I've had enough to do with the American Saviours of the World,' and swish—out she swings like a dethroned queen, and as though I were the dirt under her feet. What's the row, Dick?"

"Come on up to our rooms and I'll tell you all I know."

When Dick finished with his rather meager account, he brought forth the papers, intending to see if they would offer any enlightenment.

"Hello, they're in English, right enough," he said, as he arranged the numbered pages in proper order. "Well, I'll be jiggered!" he exclaimed as his eyes scanned the opening words and the heading of the letter. Then to his companion's astonishment, he folded the pages up and replaced them in the pocket of his coat.

"Did you find out anything?" inquired Tommy, whose curiosity was most natural.

"W-e-l-l, I don't believe they'll prove much of a clue, after all. Good-night, old dear," and to his friend's continued amazement, Dick entered his own room and closed the door behind him.

For some time after leaving Tommy, Dick sat on the edge of his bed, lost in thought. Then he took the letters again from his pocket and read them from beginning to end.

"I haven't an idea who ever wrote these gossipy things full of untruths, for the only signature is an initial," he said half aloud, "but the fact that they're from my own home town is certain, and also that they were sent to Reddy Doyle cannot be disputed, but how in the world could they get here in this house unless ——"

The best part of the night Dick Comstock was awake, trying to figure out what sequence of events followed his uncompleted sentence.

CHAPTER XII

DORLAN BELIEVES IN RECIPROCITY

Dick and Tommy, descending to the first floor of their billets the following morning, found Monsieur Flammeau declaiming excitedly before his wrecked door.

"How does this happen?" he was demanding of his wife, daughter, and the gaping servant girl. "I go to bed. I sleep soundly. On coming down early this morning I find my doors broken. It is burglars, you say. I say it cannot be. Nothing has been taken. In fact, the Germans have left nothing of value behind them to tempt burglars. All the outer doors are closed and locked. The shutters fast—yet ——"

"And did you hear no noise during the night, Father?" Mademoiselle was saying as Dick and Tommy approached the group, then catching Dick's surprised look, she blushed scarlet, but her eyes spoke to him as eloquently as though she had expressed her thoughts in words.

"Say nothing," was the appeal Dick read in their dark depths.

"Not a sound! Nor did Mother, nor Anna, here. Ah! *Bon jour, messieurs;* perhaps you may throw some light on this strange occurrence?"

Thereupon he related the cause of his mystification.

"It was a good door. A stout door, Monsieur. How—for what reason, comes it to be broken?" he ended, and his comical, self-important pose and expression nearly started both young men into spasms of laughter.

"Has Monsieur assured himself that absolutely nothing has been removed?" questioned Dick, hoping to avoid giving a direct answer to any of the fussy, little man's inquiries. "Perhaps we may find some important clue in the room itself."

But there was nothing, except possibly a chair pushed out of place—a rug disarranged.

"Most strange," muttered Monsieur. "But come! You are to break fast with us before you start, my friends. That is what brought us all from our repose at such an early hour. I am happy it is so, else discovering this wanton destruction after your departure, who knows what I might have thought? Suzette, my daughter, hasten to see if there are not fresh eggs in the yard. We have still one or two live fowl which the Germans failed to find and take from us," he added, again turning to Dick.

As Suzette departed to do her father's bidding, Dick passed through the kitchen with her, remarking as he left:

"Perhaps Mademoiselle will permit me to assist her. It is long since I have had the pleasure of hunting for fresh-laid eggs."

"But it is not for that reason you came with me," said the girl, when they were beyond hearing of the others.

"You are right, Mademoiselle. I wish you to enlighten me as to last night's adventure."

"And suppose I refuse?" she flashed at him.

"I have a very vital reason for wishing to know who was with you, Mademoiselle, and I do not believe you will think it wise to refuse my request."

"Then you would tell my father, and I did?"

"No," said Dick, "I wish to know for purely personal reasons."

For a while the girl pondered, her eyes dreaming and her thoughts apparently far away, then having made her decision, with a quick breath she began speaking.

"I will tell you briefly, Monsieur. The man with whom you heard me struggling was an American citizen. Yes, one of your army, Monsieur. He came from a friend whom I have known for several years, who used to visit here on business

before the war. I believed he liked me, and last evening when—this man—his friend came I was pleased, for he brought me good news. He arrived directly before the majority of your men reached the town. He said he was on special duty of some nature.

"What was it, you ask? I do not know. Possibly billeting officer. He could visit with me but a short while, for at the time my parents were not at home, having gone out to witness the entrance of the troops and might return at any moment. You see my father had forbidden me corresponding with my—my friend, and so I asked him to meet me later in the evening, and he agreed to return. After my parents had retired I met him and we strolled about the streets, witnessing the joy of the inhabitants and conversing until quite late. We returned shortly before you and the other officer entered the house. And, well—in the meantime I had discovered he was not the kind of man with whom I would care to be alone, and—well, Monsieur, he pushed his way into the house—he became insulting. I attempted to call for help. I had heard you enter. I tried to escape from the room, but he prevented me and turned the key in the lock. In our struggles I again reached the door and pounded on the panels with my fists, hoping that you would hear me and then—a moment later you

came, and—the rest you know. That is all. But I was afraid to tell my father. He is very severe, Monsieur, and if he ——"

"What is the man's name?" questioned Dick, bluntly, as Suzette began to weep silently.

"Oh, I don't know, Monsieur—I do not know his name," came the reply.

"But surely you must know the name of this man's friend, Mademoiselle."

"Oh, now I understand. His name, Monsieur, is Doyle, and ——"

"Suzette! Suzette! My child, hasten!" came the nervous staccato of Monsieur Flammeau's voice from the kitchen doorway.

"I am coming, Father," called the girl, and hastily gathering the eggs from some concealed nests, well under the eaves of the outhouse in which she and Dick were standing, Suzette hastily wiped away her tears then ran across the courtyard and into the house, leaving behind her a very much surprised and disgruntled young officer of Marines.

No opportunity offered for further talk with Suzette. In fact, she seemed purposely to avoid both Dick and Tommy, and as a result, when the march was resumed a little later, there remained unanswered many queries which Dick would have liked to have asked, for he could not yet bring himself to

believe that this strange man in Monsieur Flammeau's house the night previous was his old classmate and recent lieutenant, Reddy Doyle. Dick had caught but an indistinct glimpse of the girl's assailant as he scrambled over the high wall, and even had it been Reddy, he would not have been able to recognize him, but—oh, well, it just could not have been Doyle—the Doyle he knew. Yet,—there were the letters, and ——

"Yep, there's another outfit marching along over there on the next parallel road to this one," one of Dick's men was saying to another as they trudged along. "They billeted in a village about three kilometers to the left of us last night and some of the men beat it over to our town after dark, just to see how we were making out."

"I was talkin' to a bunch of 'em. They told me that our old lieutenant, Reddy Doyle, is a captain now and they say, too, he's some scrapper."

"So I hear. I was chinning with one of the men from his company."

Here, indeed, was strange substantiation of the girl's story. If men from those troops so near by could walk the short distance between the two stopping places for the night, certainly an officer would have no difficulty in making it. Dick's hand suddenly clenched on the sheets of letter paper he still carried in his coat pocket.

"It must have been so," he thought, "but somehow I can't believe it of him, and that's all there is to it."

That famous march to the Rhine took the marines not only through Belgium, but across Luxemburg and through a part of Germany before they eventually reached their posts along the broad river, and their reception, as can well be imagined, was far from joyous when they passed beyond the boundaries of King Albert's plucky little nation. With Coblenz as a center, the Americans settled down in that city and the surrounding towns and now began for them an era of healthful, routine drills, recreations, and the usual and to-be-expected police and guard duties devolving on a conquering army. Best of all to the harassed fighters was the final elimination of that pestiferous insect of trench and battlefield—the cootie.

Altogether it was a pleasant prospect, for regiments up and down the river vied with one another to excel in all kinds of sports and other features for the amusement of the men. Not one man of that Army of Occupation will forget the wonderful theatrical performances staged by the various regiments. Travelling shows they were which arrived on schedule, and gave an exhibition in which talent was never lacking. Football had its numerous dev-

otees and track events were a constant source of enthusiasm and rivalry.

At first the Germans living in the occupied towns were afraid of the Americans. This being especially noticeable as the columns first crossed the border between Luxemburg and the Rhine, but as they advanced, so did the news that the forces of Uncle Sam did not "kill everybody," and then the inhabitants became bolder. Finally in billets they attempted to fraternize to such an extent that a peremptory order was issued from American headquarters forbidding all intercourse other than that absolutely essential to their military duties between the Germans and the Army of Occupation, much to the chagrin of many a blond-haired, buxom Rhine-maiden. Already they were laying their plans to capture or be captured by these good-natured conquerors and return with them across the ocean as bashful, blushing brides.

"I never see the loikes of it in all me loife," growled Dorlan to his close companion, Sergeant Peterson; "these bloomin' Heinies seem to be thinkin' that all they have to do now that the war is supposed to be over is to bat their eyes at anny one of us Yankee soldiers and begorra we're bound to be a-fallin' for 'em and a-marryin' of 'em forthwith." Then, after a few contemplative draws at the stem of his favorite clay pipe, he added:

"And the funny part of it all is, that a bit ago our bloodthirsty outfit would almost as lief cut their foolish hearrts out as to think kindly of a single one of the colleens, and now look at 'em,—love makin' in spite of the orders to the contrary, and chucklin' under the chin and goo-goo eyein' from mornin' till night, bedad."

"Right-o, Mike, but I can't see where the attraction comes in at all."

"Of course ye'd be sayin' that, me lad, with that gurrl waitin' for ye back there in Belgium, but yer opinion is what these here lady dressmakers would be for callin' somewhat on the bias, I'm thinkin ."

Laughingly Peterson acknowledged the truth of the older man's assertion. "By the way, Mike, the Captain told me this morning that some years ago he made a trip down this river and stopped at this very town. It seems he and his sister were over here with their parents for a whole summer, nearly."

"Yes, I believe I heard him say, too, that wan of the servants in his father's household, a cook, or a nurse or somethin', was born around this neck of the woods, and that 'twas from this here servant the two of them, Miss Ursula and Misther Dick, got their first smatterin's of this outlandish jargon these poor deluded people call langwidge. Uh!

It's the poorest collection of chuckles, growls and swallers I ever heard in me loife."

"I can't say I like the sound of it either, but some of the men are learning it mighty fast, I should say."

"Yes, and they ain't a-doin' of their learnin' from no close application to anny books on the subject," ended Mike.

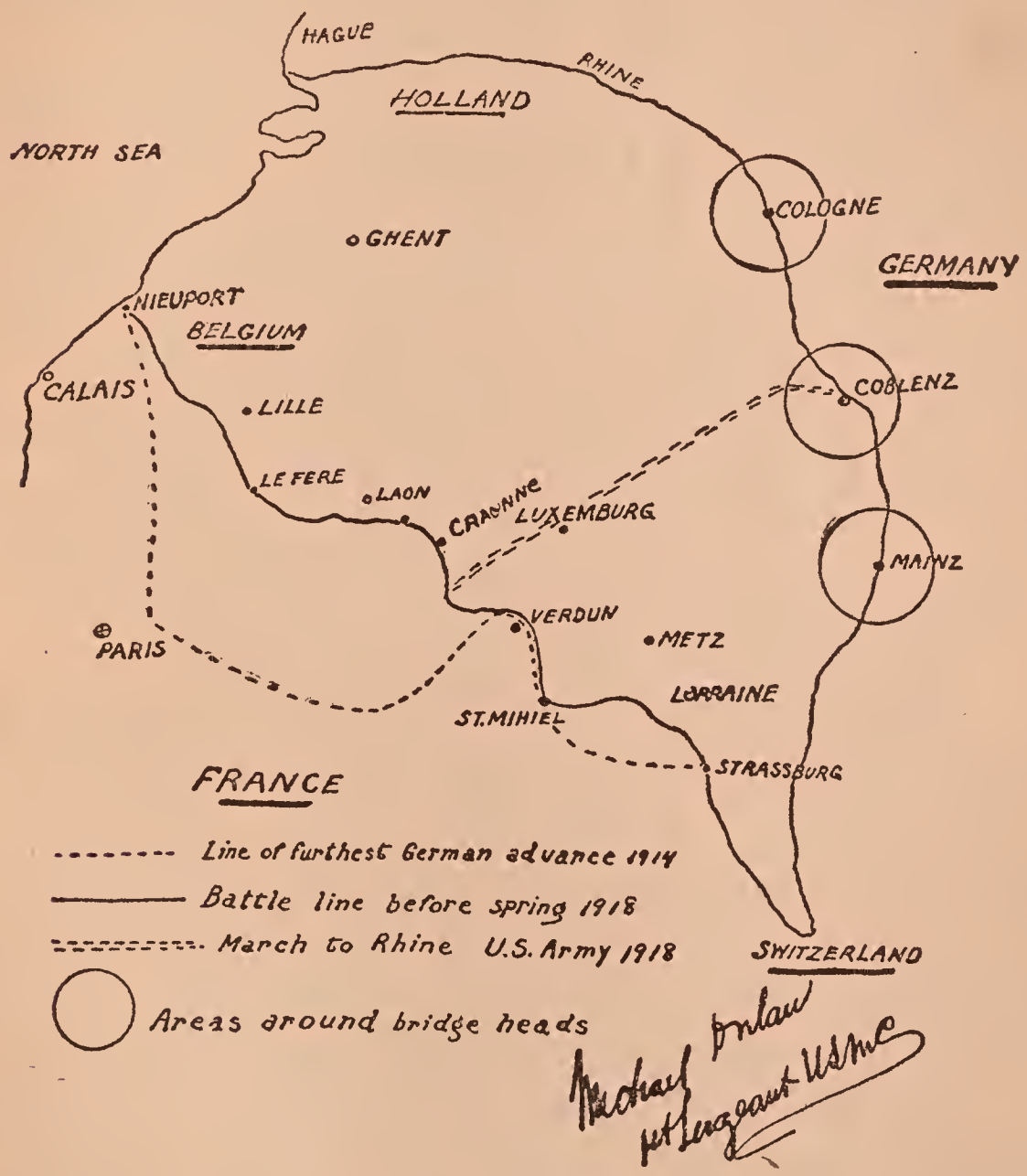
That same evening, while Mike and Peterson were enjoying a quiet smoke in one of the *gastwirtschaftes* or cafés frequented by the men of Dick's company, several privates approached the table where the two non-coms were seated and asked Dorlan to explain to them the disposition of the allied forces along the Rhine. Some discussion or other had resulted in a desire to know more about the terms of the armistice. Nothing loath, Old Mike asked for pencil and paper and drew a diagram to illustrate his talk.

"As it happens," he began, by way of introduction, "the Capt'in was explainin' this very matter to us non-coms this mornin', so I'm tellin' of ye beforehand that what I'm goin' to give ye is the straight dope."

Beginning at the top of the sheet of paper he drew an irregular line down its right-hand side.

"This here line represents the River Rhine, from Holland to Switzerland; and right here, not quite

half-way down the line, is Coblenz. This crookety line joinin' the Rhine near that city is the Moselle River, and by the way, I'll put a little circle down



at the southern end of the Moselle, right near the Frinch border, which represents the city of Metz. Half-way between Coblenz and Holland on the left bank of the Rhine is Cologne, and about an

equal distance to the southeast of us is Mayence or Mainz, whichever way yer fancy wishes to call the place."

"How do you know how to pronounce all those names, Top?" asked one of the listeners.

"Didn't I be for tellin' of ye that Capt'in Dick just explained the hull shebang to us this very mornin'? And did ye ever yit see an Irishman without a good mem'ry? Now don't go interruptin' again with foolish and unnecessary questions. Accordin' to the terms of the armistice, the Heinies were required to retire to the east bank of the Rhine, thereby givin' up all the counthry which they swiped from the Frinch in the War of 1870."

"Do you mean Alsace and Lorraine?"

"Eggzackly—and you kin bet yer old hat that Kaiser Bill is tearin' his hair out in chunks on account of that. I remember readin' onct that he told one of his arrmies in a rip-roarin' talk he give to 'em that he'd 'rather see his forty-five million Prussians dead on the field of battle than see one foot of the soil taken in 1870 give back to France.'"

"It's too bad he didn't see the first part of that speech carried out," spoke up one of the audience.

"Now to continue," resumed Mike, after filling his old clay pipe with cuttings from a dark piece of real Navy plug, "all along this west bank of the river our troops are lined up and patrollin' it, but as

an extry safeguarrd, another clause of the armistice stated that the allies would cross the river at certain important p'ints—bridgeheads, as we say in military parlance, and establish a zone around these bridgeheads, with them as a center in each case, and with a radius of thirty kilometers all around them. Outside of this zone there is a neutral zone of ten kilometers where neither our men nor anny German arrmed forces are allowed to trespass."

"Just a minute, Top," interrupted an interested youngster. "Tell us what advantage this is to us? So long as we're lined up on one bank of the river, what have we to fear?"

"It's this way, me lad: the old Rhine hereabouts is five hundred yards in width and she's too deep for anny fordin'; now, as we have our people already across the river and well established at these prominent p'ints, then if them fellers starts anny monkey business before the peace terms is signed, or they don't agree to our way of thinkin' what's right is right, don't ye see we're in a foine position right off the bat to starrt in moppin' up the entire German Empire at a moment's notice? We've got possession of the bridges and we've got several divisions of our best foightin' men ready to give 'em 'Hail Columbia' and bring 'em up with a round turn."

"I see it now. Go on!"

"At Cologne the English have their headquarters and for thirty kilometers—a semicircular area, mind ye, with that distance as its radius, the Limies have charrge. Uncle Sam's arrmies are here in the area around Coblenz, and the Frinchies are surroundin' the bridgehead at Mayence."

"If we have taken possession, why don't we do all the running of the towns then?" asked one of the men.

"There's no real reason, I suppose, but as long as them burgomeisters, or mayors, keep things goin' properly they might as well continue," said Mike. "It makes less wurruk for us and we don't have to be botherin' our heads with the civil end of the business, which would take a lot of officers and men from their military job. I've been in manny captured towns and cities in my day and as a rule we've let the natives of the places run things, so long as they do it accordin' to our sense of fitness. Sometoimes we've taken over the policin' ourselves so that there wouldn't be no conflict of authority, but manny toimes we let the native cops keep their jobs and we do the superintendin'. When a people know they're licked they gin'rally have sense enough to get aboard the band-wagon and make the best of it, even if they can't be holdin' down the driver's seat."

"You have a lot of paper left there, Top; do you

mind drawing in roughly, if you happen to remember, a line showing where we began driving the Huns back, and where the line was on the day the armistice was made. I'd like to keep it for my own information."

"If yer that much interested, me lad, I'll be only too glad to do the best I kin to make ye a good suvvynir," and with much spreading of elbows and bristling of eyebrows, the old fellow finished a very presentable and reasonably accurate sketch which he handed over to the delighted marine.

"Thanks, Sergeant," said the recipient, "and now I'll tell you the reason I asked for it was not because I didn't know about it already, but I wanted a souvenir of Old Mike Dorlan, if you want to know the truth."

It was a flattering confession and Mike could not help but feel pleased though he blustered out roughly:

"What's that yer tryin' to kid me with, ye young scalawag? And how do ye know it's right, I'm askin' ye?"

"Here it all is in this Sunday Supplement, and also a fine full-page picture of President Wilson, Top, and I'll give it to you in exchange," and the speaker unfolded the illustrated paper as he spoke.

The two drawings were favorably compared, while all the men gathered around to comment on

them and also to examine the picture of their chief executive. They were thus engaged when Frau Hoffman, the stout, elderly German proprietress of the *gastwirtschaft,* pushed her way through the group and with an exclamation of anger, snatched the paper from the table and with her pudgy hands tore it in two across the face of the man to whom she accredited the defeat of her beloved Fatherland.

"I won't have you bringing that ingrate's face inside my doors," she bristled in her native tongue.

A few of the men present understood her words —all comprehended the insult of her action, and for a moment there was an ominous stillness in the low-ceiled room of the tavern. Had hot-tar been handy Frau Hoffman might have been gallivanting down the street on a pole with as full a coat of feathers as that famous bird, the roc.

The marine who owned the paper flushed to the roots of his hair, and his eyes blazed, but the old lady stood her ground bravely.

"So that's the way you feel about it, Mother?" came the clear, crisp voice of Dorlan, and now all eyes were focussed on the veteran.

What was he going to do? Was he going to strike her?

Slowly and deliberately Mike rose to his feet, then turning his back on the irate German

woman he crossed the room to where a highly colored print of the Kaiser, in an ornate gilt frame, was hanging on the wall. With his bare, heavy fist, he deliberately smashed the glass and pulling the picture out he tore it into small bits before the appalled and astonished gaze of Frau Hoffman and the several German patrons occupying the small tables about the place. He threw the crumpled pieces of paper on the flagged floor and deliberately kicked them out of his way as he strode toward the door.

On reaching the portal he turned again to the now shaking old woman.

"Ye may not undershtand me langwidge anny better than I'm undershtandin' that of yours, old lady—but possibly ye will savvey me actions, just as I savvey yours—and were ye a man, now, I'd lambaste ye so harrd that, fat as ye are, ye'd be needin' a couple of pillows in order to be sittin' down at all, at all, for the rest of yer days," and giving an unoffending chair near him a violent kick, Mike strode out into the street, followed by every marine present.

"And that's what I call reciprocity," he said, as he walked away, "only it ain't the koind which appeals at all to me sense of right and justice."

CHAPTER XIII

ABOUT INSIGNIA AND FRAU HOFFMAN

In the town where Dick Comstock's company of marines had jurisdiction the duties were not too arduous and the men were soon settled comfortably.

Dick, Tommy Turner, Second Lieutenant Hall who had joined the company previous to the march of the division to the Rhine, and a warrant officer named Wilson, had their billets in a commodious dwelling near the home of the burgomeister, Mein Herr Jacob Schull. The men were billeted in barns, storehouses and outhouses, but these places had been fixed up quite attractively; each squad vying with their neighboring squads in giving their temporary domiciles a homey appearance.

Although the weather was crisp and at times cold it was generally pleasant. Snow, though frequent, was not heavy and only in the woods did the white ice particles remain in evidence for any length of time.

Occasionally a hunting party, composed of men or officers, would bring in a small deer as the result of a long day's tramp in the surrounding forests,

and from near-by streams it was an easy matter to procure fresh fish for the mess cooks.

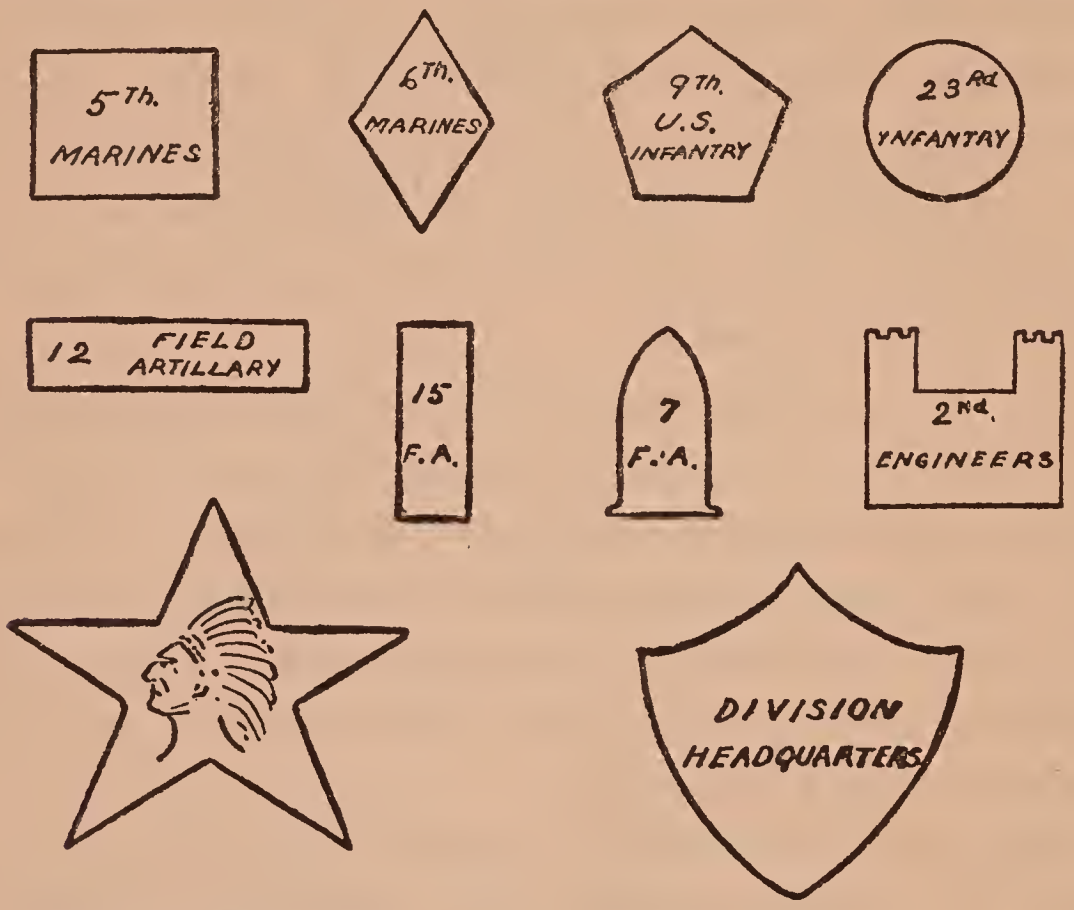
Mail came with regularity. Leave and furloughs were granted, and the old time city of Aix-les-Bains, having been designated as the chief pleasure resort for the troops, was fitted up with all sorts of healthful attractions to induce the men to spend their time there enjoying the benefits the government provided.

One thing which pleased the marines immensely was that they were again able to appear before the world in clean and well-fitting uniforms. They were now supplied throughout with the olive-drab of the United States Army, and wore on their left shoulders, and proudly too, the insignia of the famous Second Division.

This shoulder insignia is quite worthy of description. It was the profile of an American Indian's head wearing the feathered head-dress, it was mounted in a white, five-pointed star sewed on a colored background. The color of this background showed the battalion or independent company in the regiment to which the wearer belonged.

Black was used for the Headquarters Company; green for the Supply Company; purple the Machine-gun Company, and red, yellow and blue for the first, second or third battalion as the case might be.

To designate the regiment in the division to which a man belonged the background was given various shapes as follows: Fifth Marines, a square; Sixth



Marines, a diamond; Ninth Infantry, a pentagon; Twenty-third Infantry, a circle; Twelfth Field Artillery, a horizontal oblong; Fifteenth Field Artillery, a vertical oblong; Seventh Field Artil-

lery, a projectile and the Second Engineers, a castle.

"If I were to take up a fad," remarked Tommy Turner one day after returning from a brief visit to Coblenz where he had seen not only his own division's shoulder insignia with nearly every variation possible, but also many from other organizations of the army, "I believe I'd take up the collection of shoulder insignias worn by the American troops during this war. It would beat collecting stamps all to hollow in one respect at least—a fellow would have some chance of getting a complete collection before he died, and such a thing will never be possible to the stamp collector."

"Who designed the insignia for our Div?" questioned Lieutenant Hall.

"It's said that one of our truck drivers is responsible for it. He wished to follow the French custom of having some distinguishing mark such as they have on their aeroplanes, avions and so forth; so he painted the Indian's head inside a white star on both sides of his old motor-truck and some bright person in the Div spotted it and forthwith recommended its adoption," answered Gunner Wilson.

"And if you wish to see the whole works in the way of insignia you want to take a trip to Aix, or for that matter any big center," said Tommy.

"Believe me, they make your head swim both as to design and color—but it's great dope, and the men take a lot of pride in wearing them."

"I can remember," remarked Wilson, who had been a gunnery sergeant in the Marine Corps for a number of years before the war began, "when a fellow might have a few medals, and the ribbons for them, but he seldom thought to wear them. Often the government was so late in sending them to the individuals concerned that they were likely as not already discharged from the service, and only the old timers had any to speak of—they didn't bother much with the gadgets."

"I know," said Tommy, "Dick has often told me about old Dorlan for instance. It seems he had a whole boxful which he had been awarded—among them were two medals of honor, but hardly any of his shipmates knew of it. When asked why he never wore them he used to say that until he could wear a good conduct medal for an enlistment in the Corps he wouldn't wear any. He said that that truly meant merit, whereas a medal of honor, while it denoted extraordinary heroism and bravery possibly, the chances were that the act for which it was given was done under the influence of excitement and not due to any good sense on the part of the recipient."

"Yes, I've served with Mike before this," said

Wilson; "the old fellow was always getting into trouble on account of his over fondness for alcohol, and it meant a S. C. M.[1] on his record, and if there's one of those down against you on your enlistment you haven't a chance in the world of getting the medal. However he got one for his last hitch."

"You bet he did! He made a wager of some sort with Dick. I guess his devotion and his desire to stand well in his 'lad's' estimation helped him win out."

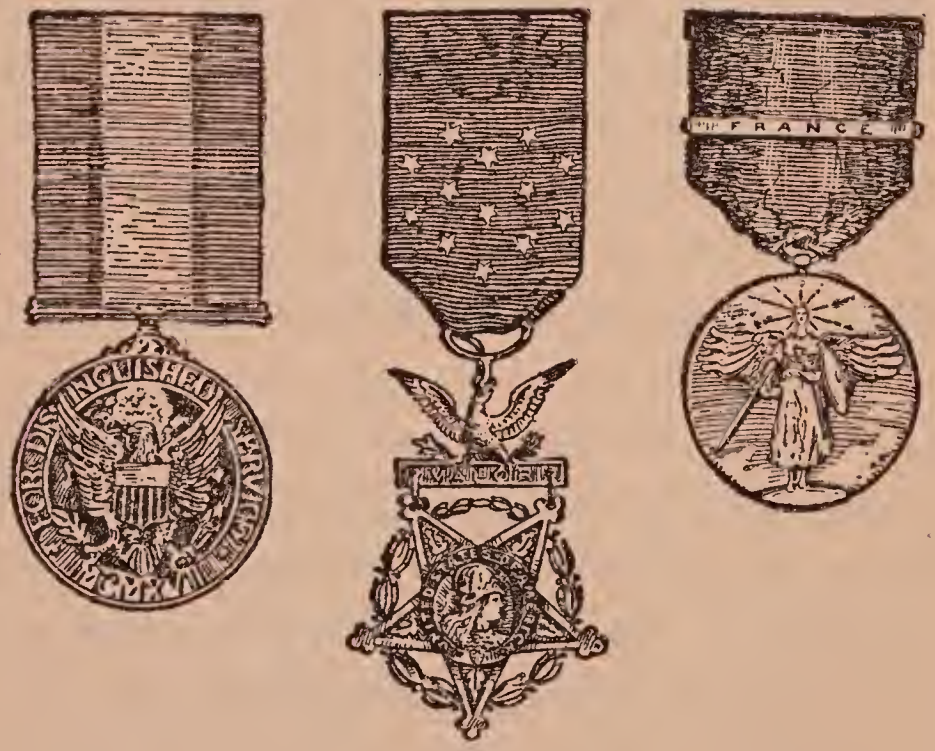
"For short service, Captain Comstock has been no slouch when it comes to picking up such things," said Hall. "He sure has a string of them across his left chest now, with that D. S. C. which the Secretary of the Navy handed out to him when he visited us last week."

"Yep! Dick's been in service now for less than eight years," remarked Tommy, "and he has medals for the Nicaraguan, Mexican, Haitian and San Domingan campaigns; an army D. S. C.; a Croix de Guerre from the French, an M. C. good conduct medal, and badges for expert rifleman and pistol shot."

"And Congress is now passing an act to award a Victory medal for this war," said Hall. "It's to be a beauty, suspended on a rainbow-colored rib-

[1] Summary Court-Martial.

1 2 3 4



5 6 7

1. Medal of Honor (New Design).
2. Navy War Cross (D. S. C.).
3. Army War Cross (D. S. C.).
4. Navy Distinguished Service Medal (D. S. M.).
5. Army Distinguished Service Medal (D. S. M.).
6. Army Medal of Honor.
7. Victory Medal.

bon, with a separate clasp for each major operation which the man who receives it took part in. That will make another one for all of us to wear."

"I reckon about the only decoration which won't be popular with our troops is the Iron War Cross of Prussia. However, I've seen both men and officers search among the fallen for them, just to keep them as souvenirs, you know."

"That cross is still popular with the Heinies, though," advised Wilson. "This morning I saw one of their demobilized soldiers strutting around town sporting his medal and proud of it apparently."

"I saw him. I was in the office when he reported to the Captain," said Hall. "He told us he was in the fight at Chateau Thierry against us, and though he was wounded in that scrap he was returned to the lines in time to take part in several other engagements before the armistice. His name is Hoffman, a son of the old woman who runs the *gastwirtschaft.*"

"It's remarkable how few demobilized Germans are appearing," remarked Tommy. "I believe they are endeavoring to keep as much of their army intact as is possible. Had this fellow Hoffman been to Division Headquarters and through the delousing and disinfecting plants down there?"

"Yes," smiled Hall, "he had a clean bill of

health. He said he was intending to assist his mother in running the tavern until matters were straightened out some. He's a smart-looking, foxy-eyed fellow—about thirty odd years of age, I judge, and I can't say he appeared very servile or hardly polite some of the time. Of course the Captain was able to 'give and take' when it came to talking Hoffman's lingo—he can't speak English—and after the man left Captain Dick expressed a belief that Hoffman was the kind of man to make trouble if the opportunity offered. One of those who knew he was licked but wouldn't acknowledge it. He also said there was something familiar about the man, but he couldn't say exactly what it was."

"Well, Bo, if he's looking for trouble he's very liable to find his hands full if he starts anything with this company," said Wilson, grimly.

"I wonder what he will have to say when the old lady tells him how Mike treated her precious picture of the Kaiser?" added Tommy.

And Tommy would have been surprised indeed, could he have overheard the conversation taking place in Frau Hoffman's private rooms at that very hour.

Friedrich Hoffman was sitting at ease in his mother's room. His military coat unbuttoned; his stockinged-feet from which the heavy leathern

boots worn by the army of Prussia had been removed, were resting on a cushioned chair, placed for the "war god" by the adoring hands of his old mother. On a little stand at his elbow rested a highly decorated stein of frothy beer; while overhead a smoke cloud lingered, blue and filmy, filling the air with the aroma of a much better tobacco than Frau Hoffman dispensed over her tiny counter in the large room of the public tavern below-stairs.

"It is worth an absence of a dozen years, Mother, to return to such agreeable surroundings and such a warm reception," Friedrich was saying.

"But for your stubbornness, Friedrich, you might have been enjoying it for many years past," answered the old lady.

"Yes, apparently I've missed much, but now that I'm here I expect to enjoy it all the more to recompense myself for the years lost," and he smiled, though neither kindly nor genially, at the stout woman who hovered and fussed around him like an anxious hen with her one precious chick.

"Indeed you must, my son—indeed you shall!"

"Do these rascally, impudent Yankees give you any trouble?" he now questioned.

"No—no; none at all. They seldom patronize my place. Though at first mine was the most popular establishment in the town."

"Then you are not reaping the harvest you might, eh?" remarked the son. "I have no use for them, but they spend their money freely and we should do something to get their trade. Now is the opportunity to store away some surplus funds against the hard days which I fear will come. Why have they transferred their patronage?"

"I suppose it was due to a thoughtless act of mine," she replied, and thereupon followed the story of the evening First Sergeant Dorlan had destroyed the sacred picture of Kaiser Wilhelm, and stamped the remnants beneath his hob-nailed shoes.

"Since then," she ended, "not one of the company locally billeted here has entered the building, except for some official purposes."

During the recital the son Friedrich listened with half closed but attentive eyes, and the lighted cigar remained neglected. For a few moments after the conclusion of the tale he remained silent, but now the smoke-cloud was thicker than before.

His next question was most unexpected.

"To whom have you told you had a son in the Kaiser's army?"

"No one, Friedrich," and the old mother closely scrutinized her son's features. "How could I tell what I did not know myself? For all I was aware to the contrary, you might have been fighting

against the Fatherland. You must remember that I've not heard from you since you ran ——"

"Let us not speak of that," interrupted the son, harshly. "Then, of course, you have not told them your son was in America?"

"Naturally I have not. Though I may have thought of you many times, Friedrich, my thoughts have been my own—I seldom spoke of you to the townspeople even."

"Ashamed to?" briefly.

"Not ashamed, my boy, but overcome with heart-hurt—but, as you say, let us not talk of that. You have come back and my joy is great," and the old mother surreptitiously wiped her eyes with a corner of her capacious apron.

"Will the neighbors say anything, now that I have returned?"

"I believe not," and now the watery old eyes looked away from the man, out through the small-paned window. "I have never told them that I did not know where you were. You see," she spoke with quick apology, "I must speak of things gone by. I never told them that you ran away, without saying a word to your mother, nor that I did not know where you had gone, nor that I never had heard from you. I was not going to have them say unkind things of my son. I used your aunt's letters as a blind. They used to come regularly before

this war began. I used them to carry on the deception. Yes, it hurt to do so, but it was better than that they should think ill of you."

"My aunt—she is then still in the United States?"

"I do not know now, for since sometime before the United States so deceitfully joined with the Allies against us I have received no word. But you—you say you have been in America, you surely must have seen your Aunt Frieda."

"I? Why, Mother, you are like all provincial Europeans—you imagine the United States is nothing but a small town where everyone knows his neighbors. America is a vast republic. It could swallow the German Empire and Austro-Hungary combined, many times over, and then have room to spare. But where was Aunt Frieda when you last heard from her?"

"She has always remained with the family with whom she first took employment. You must remember, Friedrich. I have often read you her letters from the old New England town in Connecticut. It is called ——"

"Yes, yes, I remember," interrupted the man, and now he was all attention. "It had slipped my mind for the moment. But tell me—tell me the name of the family with whom she found employment. You say it is the same one?"

His former indolence had flown. He removed his feet from the chair and was now sitting bolt upright, gazing intently at the old lady, almost as though he were angry with her.

"Yes, the same family the entire time. She left here soon after our father's death, to try her fortunes in the new world. She has been very generous to me. It was by her help that I was able to establish this business. It was the money she has sent me each month from America which made it possible for me to deceive the neighbors and make them believe it was money you were ——"

"What was the name, I asked you?" and the son was now glaring at the mother and his voice had become a roar of impatience.

"Comstock—John Comstock! Oh, Friedrich, why have you become so hard a man? Is there really no affection nor love in you? My boy—my little boy!" and Frau Hoffman, rising with surprising quickness for one of her size and years, crossed the room to where her son sat staring at the floor, lost in thought, and placing her worn, trembling hands on his close-cropped, bullet-shaped head, she attempted some motherly fondling.

"Bah! Let me alone. I wish to think this thing out," came the rough answer; "and I want another stein."

When the old lady had left the room to carry out

his request, great tears were rolling down her fat cheeks, while behind her the man was muttering aloud:

"So it is Captain Dick Comstock's father, eh? Well, I guess I can find a way to bring back the American trade to my mother's door without much trouble. That is, if some of the things I've heard about this Captain are to be believed. This adds but another score for me to even up with that fresh Yankee. I hate them all, but I hate this fellow more than any of them. Had it not been for his father, I might yet be living in ease in New York. It was his old man's suspicions of me that nearly caused my arrest, and forced me to escape to volunteer to fight for America. Bah!"

CHAPTER XIV

DICK HAS TWO SURPRISES

"READ this, Tommy," and Dick tossed several sheets of paper, covered with German script, across to his lieutenant, "then tell me what you think about it."

It was toward the end of the first month of the new year and a few days after the return of the demobilized soldier, Friedrich Hoffman, to his paternal roof-tree.

Tommy picked up the letter and pored over it with a puzzled look on his pleasant face. He turned it upside down and sideways and finally handed it back to Dick's keeping.

"It's a sad commentary on the waywardness of womankind, nor does it speak any too well for you, my boy," he announced, solemnly, and shaking his head sadly. "To tell the truth, Dick, I feel a little ashamed for you."

It was now Dick's turn to look puzzled, for after giving the paper to Tommy he had remembered that the youngster knew but few German words

and those recently acquired, while his knowledge of the written language was nil.

"Yes," continued Tommy, in the same tone, "if she had not written that epistle I might have believed in her, but since she has taken up the study of the Turkish language, I can scarcely give any credence to the assertion she makes so frankly! No, if I were you, Dick, the best thing to do under the circumstances is to remember your position, renounce her suit and marry the other girl. In the first place, I believe she has not given her correct age; in the second place, she has altogether misrepresented her claims on you; and thirdly, the amount of her fortune, as stated by her, reads fishy."

"What in the world are you talking about?" exclaimed Dick. "At first I began to believe you understood what the note says, but now ——"

"But now you are convinced of the fact, eh?" interrupted Tommy, with a snigger. "Why, Dick, I have as much knowledge as to the meaning of those hen scratches as a polar bear on an Arctic iceberg has of the relation existing between a tropical alligator pear and a Brazilian ant-eater, and that's going some, if 'I do be fer sayin' of it meself, as what shouldn't,' to quote our old friend Mike."

"My mind is greatly relieved, Tommy, and see-

ing that you are so frank I'll read you the contents. It is addressed to me and this is what it says:

"'Most Honored Sir:—Doubtless you have heard of the regrettable incident of recent date which occurred in my tavern, when in a moment of extreme tension I destroyed a photogravure of your honored president. However, my action was most properly belittled by a sergeant of your command, who destroyed a picture of the recent ruler of the German Empire, which was hanging on the wall near by.

"'I have many times thought of apologizing to you for my unpardonable action, but age and infirmity have till now prevented my so doing. I appreciate the previous kindness and consideration of the members of your command, and the loss of their patronage and the absence of their genial and gentlemanly presence from my place of business has saddened me immeasurably. I hope with the above restitution on my part that I may again have the honor of serving not only your men, but yourself and your officers, more frequently, and I promise you every attention within my poor ability in order that I may reëstablish myself in your favor.'"

"The old lady has sure kissed the Blarney Stone," said Tommy at this point, "but it's easy to read between the lines—she wants the money that has been passing her door, and I imagine the loss of that touches her heart more than the insult to her precious Kaiser."

"Wait a minute and listen, Tommy; here is the really interesting part," and Dick continued reading:

"'While addressing you, Mein Herr Captain-Commandant, it may be of interest to you to know that one of the servants in your father's household in the United States, Frieda Schilling, is none other than my blood sister. I would appreciate a visit from you in order that I may inquire as to her health, for since the war was declared I have received no word of her and naturally I am most anxious on her account.' The letter then closes with the usual assurances of consideration and regard, and is signed, 'Minna Hoffman,'" ended Dick.

"Well," began Tommy, and stopped to roll his eyes expressively and rub his stomach, "well, if the old *hausfrau* at the tavern can make gingerbread cookies anything like those turned out by your old cook Frieda, I'd almost be inclined to believe her story, accept her apology and cap the climax by sampling her food. What do you say, Dick?"

Dick was thoughtfully reading over again certain portions of the letter, and waited a moment before he answered.

"Yes, if Frau Hoffman is half the cook her sister Frieda was, I'd almost be inclined to agree with you, but it's mighty funny this letter of

apology didn't come along until after the return of that foxy-faced son of hers, and if the old lady knew all along that I knew her sister so well, it sure looks peculiar that she never made any attempt in all this time we have been here to inquire about her before. The letter and inquiry coming right now make me wonder still more where it is I have seen the precious Friedrich. I'm positive that he is really responsible for this apparent change of feeling. He wants his mother to gather in the shekels while the gathering is good and easy. It may be possible that this claim about relationship between the old lady and Frieda is all a hoax, but if so, how in the world did they find out that Frieda is working for my mother? Furthermore, I distinctly remember that Frieda came from Cologne, though she did have relatives along the Rhine, too, because she used to get Ursula and me to tell her all about our summer over here, years before the war."

"So you still think that you have seen that fellow Hoffman before, do you?" queried Tommy.

"I don't think—I know."

"Well, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to pay a call on the old woman and establish friendly relations?"

"Perhaps so, in a day or two," answered Dick. "It—the letter, I mean, doesn't ring true. I want

to think it over a bit and see if I can discover just what it is that makes me suspicious in the matter. After all, it may be nothing. By the way, Tommy, have you attended to the detail for the patrol tonight? If not, you'd better get busy for it is growing late, son."

"Aye, aye, sir, Mein Herr Captain-Commandant," came the reply, as Tommy rose and saluted in stiff German style. "I'll get the thing fixed up in no time, but Dick, if you make a deal for any gingerbread cookies, please remember my failings in that direction," and out the youngster went into the crisp air to look up Sergeant Dorlan.

As Tommy emerged into the narrow street, his quick eye spied Old Mike approaching the house with a young woman hanging eagerly on either arm. The youthful officer stopped in amazement, rooted to the spot.

"Well, I'll be jiggered," he said, scratching his head in perplexity. "I'll have to inquire into this matter. Old Mike fraternizing with the enemy—and the most deadly sort of enemy at that—the females."

As the women with their escort approached, Tommy could hear the sound of voices and laughter. He was now nearly speechless, for here was Dorlan carrying on an animated conversation with two young women of this Rhineland village and to

Tommy's knowledge, up to the present time, Old Mike had disclaimed any proficiency in the German tongue whatsoever, and there was not a girl in the place who could carry on any but a most rudimentary talk in English.

The next moment Tommy heard his own name called out by the two girls, as their voices came to him clear and true on the frosty air.

"Hi, Tommy!" "Hello, Tommy Turner!"

Tommy rubbed his eyes and pinched himself to see if he were really awake, then convinced that such was the case, the next moment he was running full tilt toward Ursula Comstock and Marie Faure, both of whom had now outdistanced the slower going Dorlan in their eagerness to meet the young officer at least half-way.

"Well, of all the best surprises in the world!" exclaimed the boy as he reached them, nearly breathless. "What are you doing in this neck of the woods, and how did you get here? How long are you going to stay, and did you come all this way alone, and—why, say, you are the last persons, but by far the most welcome ones my most vivid imagination could picture in this slow old burg. Gosh, but I'm glad to see you!"

"I see you haven't lost your faculty of asking more questions to the square inch than a five-year-old, Tommy; but the answer is easy. Father has

finished up his work in France, and he and Mother accompanied us as far as Coblenz. Both Ursula and I have been mustered out of the nurses' corps and we are all on our way home."

"Mr. and Mrs. Faure are still in Coblenz, and they ——" began Ursula.

"They will be along to-night," interjected Marie, who was bubbling over with gaiety. "You see, we couldn't wait, so the Commanding General was kind enough to send us up the river on one of the patrol boats, and ——"

"Yes, and aren't they just fine, Tommy?" chattered Ursula. "Who was it said that Marine Officers never could or should command government vessels? It looks to me like a navy of our own with a Marine Officer in command and a full crew of marines manning those smart little craft. Our marines seem to be able to do anything under the sun —but Tommy, never mind any more questions and answers now, we want to see Dick. Don't we, Marie?"

"Why, of course we do—that is what we came up for in such a hurry—I mean," she corrected herself as a rush of color suffused her pretty face, "I mean, of course, to see him and you, Tommy dear, and Sergeant Dorlan and all the rest, you know," she finished rather vaguely.

"Yes, I know," replied Tommy, dryly, and a

most undignified wink was exchanged between the youngster and Old Mike, who now stood by, beaming in the near background.

"Well, come on in then," he continued. "This is where he—we live."

Tommy flung open the door and motioned for the girls to step inside. Then going to the foot of the stairs he called out lustily:

"Hello, Captain Dick Comstock. You're wanted down below at once, sir. On the double, skipper; there's a heap of trouble brewing, and it needs you to straighten it out." When he heard Dick's response, as that officer came hurrying down the stairs, he went out quietly into the street, closing the door gently behind him.

A half-hour later Dick, Ursula and Marie were wending their way to the old tavern kept by Frau Hoffman, as the only caravansary in the village capable of affording the accommodations which would be required upon the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Faure.

"The old *gastwirtschaft* is quiet," Dick was saying, "and also it is extremely neat. The only place here that is at all suitable for housing you comfortably during your visit."

"And you said the old lady who runs the place is our Frieda's sister?" questioned Ursula. "I can imagine how anxious she must be to get news of

Frieda, if she has had no word since Uncle Sam declared war against Germany."

"Well, as I told you, she makes that assertion," said Dick. "I was about to pay her a visit, for to-day I received a letter from her telling me of the relationship. What gets me is, why she waited such a long time before making inquiries. It seems rather remarkable to my way of thinking. Here we are," and with that he opened the door and ushered the two girls into the low-ceiled, public room of the tavern.

At this hour of the day there were but few patrons in the place. Frau Hoffman was nowhere in sight, but comfortably seated behind the small counter, with his feet resting higher than his head, in real Yankee style, was Friedrich Hoffman, the demobilized soldier.

Observing the entrance of an American officer and two women, Friedrich aroused himself and rising, slowly approached. Not until he was within a few feet of the newcomers did he recognize in Dick the American commander of the troops stationed in the village. Then his face assumed a smug, self-satisfied expression.

"Ha, the very straight-laced, unapproachable Captain keeps his soldiers away for a purpose—so that he may bring his lady friends here and not be disturbed by his underlings," he thought to him-

self. "A nice story I can make of this. It won't have to be invention, but the truth. I wonder what his commanding general would have to say if I should go to him with the tale?"

Aloud he said in German:

"Good-afternoon, Mein Herr Captain-Commandant! In what way may I be of service to you, sir?" and he bowed obsequiously.

"I desire accommodations for my sister and her friend, and also for her friend's father and mother, who will be arriving later in the evening," said Dick.

"Ah, I see; your sister, and—but I will call my mother; she will attend to your wants at once," and with a skeptical look on his face, he disappeared in quest of Frau Hoffman.

While Friedrich Hoffman was talking the light from the windows shone full on the German's face, so that the girls could see him plainly while they were in the shadow, and as he turned away Marie, unable to contain her excitement over a discovery she had made, drew Ursula to one side and whispered in the older girl's ear, while Dick in the meantime was looking about the room.

"Ursula, did you recognize that man? It's the soldier who called himself Doyle and who escaped from the hospital in Paris the day of the big parade on the Fourth of July. Don't you remember?"

And right at that moment Frau Hoffman came bustling into the room, and with many expressions of hospitality she escorted her guests through the hall and up the stairs to their rooms talking volubly as she led the way.

CHAPTER XV

DICK FACES A FEW PROBLEMS

"AH, then it is true, you have known my sister Frieda for many years—since you were little children?"

Frau Hoffman's face was beaming with pleasure as she asked the question. If Dick had entertained any doubts as to the truth that Frieda Schilling and Minna Hoffman, the owner of the *gastwirtschaft,* were sisters, this stout old woman's manner dispelled them at once and for all time.

"Yes, indeed," Ursula replied. "We would not know how to get along without Frieda. She is as firmly a part of the home as the house itself."

"And she is well—she was not imprisoned because she is German?"

"Oh, no. Frieda is still at our home," answered the girl. "Furthermore she is as much an American as any member of the family."

"I am glad to hear that she is well and safe, and —well, I suppose after all these years of absence from Germany she must have forgotten the ways of the Fatherland. Perhaps it is for the best. I do not know. It is too deep for me. Something must

have been wrong or God would not have permitted us to have failed otherwise," and the old lady shook her head dolefully.

"And now, Fräulein, tell me how you like your rooms? And do you believe your father and mother, also, will like theirs?"

"Yes, everything is very nice indeed, but it is not my father and mother who are expected. It is Mr. and Mrs. Faure, the parents of my friend; however, I am quite certain that they, too, will be pleased with the accommodations furnished."

"The name Faure is French, is it not? Are your parents French, Fräulein?" and now the old lady turned and addressed herself to Marie who had been conversing animatedly with Captain Dick.

"Yes and no, Frau Hoffman," replied Marie. "You see, they were born in Paris, but many years ago went to the United States to live and I was born in that country. My father is now a citizen there."

"America must indeed be a wonderful country," said the old lady. "The world emigrates there and soon the world becomes American. My son says it is even bigger than our German Empire, and as it took the Americans to win this war from us, I begin to believe they are truly a vast nation."

"Then your son—he has been in the United

States?" questioned Dick, hoping by his query he might elicit some information which would give him the clue he sought regarding Friedrich's identity.

Frau Hoffman opened her mouth to answer, but just then a loud knock at the nearly closed door made her turn and stopped her reply. The door opened a few inches, just far enough to admit her son's head.

"Pardon me, Mother, but you are wanted at once down-stairs," he muttered gruffly, and Dick caught the venomous, ugly look the son gave the mother as she made her apologies and hurried away.

After her departure Marie and Ursula exchanged glances, for the appearance of Friedrich had recalled to their mind their previous discovery.

"Had we better tell Dick?" asked Marie, as the sound of retreating footsteps ceased.

"Why, yes, I guess it's all right and perhaps he ought to know about it anyway," answered Ursula.

"What's all this," asked Dick, "a deep secret?"

"Oh, no, but you never could guess it, Dick. Could he, Ursula?"

"No, I don't believe that he could; but then, you must remember he really would have no reason to suspect anything of the kind."

"What in the world are you girls driving at?"

"Why, it's something we believe we should tell you,—that is, if you promise not to do anything to cause trouble, Dick. You see his mother would feel horribly if anything should happen now," began Marie.

"And besides, the war is really all over, and there would be no reason to do anything under those circumstances, and possibly Marie isn't quite sure of him. It may be all a mistake. You see she isn't absolutely certain as yet, Dick."

"That is true, dear," said Marie, turning to Ursula. "I only saw him a few times. He wasn't in my ward, you know."

Dick had stood about all he could. What could this momentous announcement possibly be?

There was a man in it. Announcement! Man!

Was Ursula—was Marie about to announce an engagement?

"Help! Help!" he called in mock despair, and then as the full significance of his thought came to him, he sank to a chair limply, and tried to appear a calm, unexcited captain of marines, but his heart, for some reason which he could not quite fathom, was going at a much faster rate than usual, and his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth in an uncomfortable manner.

"Marie, it is you—it is—please tell me the man's name."

"His name is Doyle," came the answer.

"Doyle—not Reddy Doyle?" and Dick was on his feet, indignant—protesting.

"Why, of course not Reddy Doyle, you big goose," said Ursula. "You don't know what his other name is, do you, Marie?"

"No, I can't remember," came the answer from the girl.

"You mean to tell me," blurted Dick, thoroughly obsessed with his own interpretation of the meaning of all this talk, "you mean to tell me that you—that you are engaged to some man and you don't even know his name?"

"Engaged?"

"Who?"

"What are you talking about, Dick?"

It was Ursula and Marie whose turn it was now to be astonished.

"Who is engaged?"

"That's what I want to know," exclaimed Dick. "Didn't you say—oh, I don't know what you did say now, but I thought ——" and then his sister doubled up on the bed and Marie sank to the floor while both girls broke into such peals of laughter that Dick began to get alarmed and contemplated sending for the surgeon, fearing they would become

too hysterical for him to manage. He had forgotten a lot about girls since he had joined the marines.

"Oh, Dick, you're so funny," Ursula finally managed to gasp, and then off she went into another gale, while Marie sought for her handkerchief to dry the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"It's so funny," she repeated like a parrot.

"It may be funny when you're on the inside," announced Dick solemnly, "but——" then he stopped and blushed, looking again at Marie as she rose and went to the window where she stood looking out at the crimsoning western sky, hoping the reflection might conceal her own heightened color.

"I'll explain, Dick," and Ursula, rising, went over to her brother and put her arm affectionately around his shoulder. "You see, when we first came in the tavern a little while ago, it was very dim down there and the setting sun lit up the face of the man who, we have since learned, is Frau Hoffman's son, Friedrich. As soon as Marie saw him she immediately recognized him as the soldier who was in the hospital in Paris where we were working. It was the man about whom there was so much talk and suspicion—the man called Doyle, who escaped that morning the Marines paraded through the streets of the city after their great victory at Belleau Wood. You may remember we mentioned

the matter when you came in to see Tommy Turner, after the parade was over."

Dick drew a long, long breath of relief. "Yes, I remember," he said, and then, as his thoughts again became collected, he added, "By Jinks, I told Tommy I'd seen that foxy face somewhere before, but till now I couldn't for the life of me place it. Didn't you tell me that this fellow, Doyle, at first claimed to have fought at Belleau Wood and in my company?"

"Yes, that is what he said before he went under ether for his operation."

"It's the same man. I know him now. Why, girls, that fellow is a regular skunk from Skunkville. He was with my company the first day of the fight at Belleau Wood. Reddy Doyle had him in tow as his runner. Reddy said he claimed to be a straggler from our Quartermaster's Department, and that night, when we sent out a patrol to bag some Germans whom we heard out in front of us engaged in building a machine-gun nest, they were informed in some way before our men could surround them and they got away. The following morning when we made our first real advance across the wheat fields, we all thought that the enemy opposed to us at that point seemed to be unaccountably well posted as to our movements and they made us suffer heavily."

"Then you think that he is a spy, Dick?"

"Of course he is, or rather, was, but that isn't all there is to it. During the night at the time I saw him it was altogether too dark for me to get a good look at his face, but I was sure the moment he stepped in my office, when he came back here claiming to be a demobilized soldier, that I had seen him before and now I remember. Friedrich Hoffman was the sniper in the tree who shot and nearly killed Tommy Turner."

"Why, how do you know that? Did you see him?"

"Well, I ought to know," Dick replied, modestly. "You see, I happened to be near him and I shot him out of the tree just as he shot at Tommy, but after he fell to the ground I didn't have time to see whether he was alive or not. I was too busy."

"That is something you never told before," remarked Ursula admiringly, as she gave her brother another affectionate hug, "but what will you do about the matter? Is there anything you can do?"

"There is nothing that can be done now," said Dick gloomily. "It's too late. The armistice is signed and according to the Rules of Land Warfare he is immune, but believe me, I'll have Mr. Friedrich Hoffman-Doyle watched mighty closely from now on, and if we catch him at any underhand tricks or sending any information outside the

area we occupy to his friends in the German Army, we'll get him."

"But we thought a spy could always be shot if caught," said Marie, who had so far been a silent listener, "and that is what we feared—that you would arrest him and then we would feel that we had been responsible if anything happened. You see, Dick, I wouldn't mind, nor would Ursula either, if we were actually fighting the Germans, but the armistice seems about the same as a Treaty of Peace, and ——"

"That doesn't make the real difference," said Dick. "This part of the proceedings is only a breathing spell, so to speak, and you can't really tell which way 'the cat will jump' in the end, although it looks as if there will be no more fighting. However, this territory is under martial law—occupied territory, and if anyone is caught within our lines seeking to give out information as to our strength, disposition, material, and so forth, they can still be held as a spy.

"In Hoffman's case the fact that he was acting as a spy in our lines months ago doesn't count now. The regulations say 'A spy who, after rejoining the army to which he belongs, is subsequently captured by the enemy, is treated as a prisoner of war, and incurs no responsibility for his previous acts of espionage.' This fellow, you see, did rejoin his

army after he escaped from the Paris hospital, and now he really has been demobilized, according to the papers which he showed me the day he came back here."

"Isn't it peculiar he should have called himself Doyle?" said Ursula.

"Yes, it is rather, but—look here, we are forgetting to keep a weather-eye open for Mr. and Mrs. Faure all this time, so while you girls are resting up a bit, I'll go down into the village and when they come I will bring them right up here."

As Dick went down the stairs his mind was full of the recent talk, and in his absorption he nearly collided with stout Frau Hoffman, making her waddling way along the lower hall.

"I see that you are going out, Mein Herr Captain-Commandant," said the old lady, trying to appear at her ease and most cordial. "Why, let me see—you were asking me a question when I was called away so suddenly on business a short time since. Ah, yes, I remember now—it was whether my son had ever been in the United States or not. Yes, yes, that was it, and the answer is: No, Mein Herr, he has spent his entire lifetime in Germany. He is wholly German, sir. He cannot speak any language but his own—not even French, Mein Herr, and all during the war he fought in the Army of the Fatherland along the Russian border. He

was glad that he did not have to fight against the Americans because, when the United States joined our enemies, he said he wished he could get out of the fighting, as in his heart he was no longer positive that we—that Germany was in the right, and ——"

But Dick cut short any further volubility on the old lady's part, and with a—" Thank you for your information, Mein Frau," he hastened past her.

" The poor old thing," said Dick to himself. " I guess friend Friedrich has been posting her, and the old lady is willing to tell any kind of a lie in order to protect her boy. Mothers are the same the world over, and I can't help feeling sorry for her, because I believe the son is just a plain, ordinary scoundrel. But what worries me most is the connection between this man and Reddy Doyle. Why did Reddy conceal his knowledge of this Hoffman? He must have suspected the man. Where is the connecting link? It can't be that Reddy was harboring him knowing him to be a spy, but just what is the meaning of it? Is there any connection between this man and the girl in Belgium whom Reddy was with that night I broke in upon them? I've some tall thinking ahead of me to get this all straightened out and to clear Reddy as I'd really like to do."

CHAPTER XVI

WHILE THE CAT IS AWAY

For the next week, it must be confessed that the troops stationed in and about the little German village nestling on the banks of the Rhine a few kilometers south of Coblenz scarcely saw their company commander, nor, as a rule, did they see much more of Tommy Turner.

The reason being that in the few days left to Mr. and Mrs. Faure, Marie and Ursula, before their departure for Brest where they were to embark aboard one of the Army transports which would return them to the United States, much had to be accomplished in the way of sightseeing. Dick insisted that each day an excursion to some new point of interest must be undertaken and he generally dragged Tommy along to round out the party.

These little jaunts were a decided change for both youngsters, and as a result the succeeding days were long to be remembered because of the unalloyed pleasure experienced by them all.

The weather continued perfect. Walks, rides, motor trips, and an occasional journey up or down

the river in the trim, little patrol boats induced a laxity and forgetfulness which was deeply enjoyed. Past wars and the possibilities of future conflict alike were never thought of.

Even the startling disclosures regarding the part played by Friedrich Hoffman were laid aside by Dick after the first night in his enjoyment of the presence of his sister and these old friends.

Dick fully intended to interview Friedrich and take him to task regarding the discrepancies in the tale he had first told him, and that told him by Frau Hoffman, but the days slipped by and he had as yet done nothing.

As a result Friedrich Hoffman began to feel very secure as to his position, and true to his nature he soon was in touch with certain men who were easily led, and thus had begun to form several friendships among the Americans.

During this time, too, there were numerous changes taking place in the personnel of the company. Many of the men who had been with the outfit since the beginning of the war were replaced by men from the camp back in Pontanezen, and one or two changes were made among the junior officers. As is nearly always the case under such circumstances, especially when troops have become long familiar with local conditions and after a strenuous campaign, the excitement of and the in-

terest in a new environment soon wears away, and there follows a slight decline in morale, especially among the newer elements.

Frau Hoffman's *gastwirtschaft* was now well patronized. The older men seeing that their captain and officers had become frequent visitors of the place soon forgot the incidents of the first days of their arrival, and as the methods employed by the old lady's son were such as to make credit unlimited the tavern continued to grow in popularity. There is probably no class of individuals more susceptible to the lure of credit than the enlisted man, be he soldier, sailor or marine.

It was remarkable how quickly Friedrich Hoffman was " picking up " a knowledge of the English tongue. But to those who might have thought at all in regard to the matter, their surprise was satisfied when they found that he was continually consulting an old German-English dictionary or delving among the pages of an equally antiquated grammar. Furthermore, he took every opportunity to join in conversations, and his funny expressions caused much merriment among his patrons. To a close observer it might have appeared that some of the remarks made by Friedrich had been studied out with care beforehand.

Another peculiar thing was occurring—and that was nothing less than a repetition of the stories

which had been rife among the men during the old days of the training area regarding Dick's antipathy toward his former lieutenant, Percy Doyle.

Late one afternoon, the last day of the Faures' visit, the public room of the little tavern was well filled with marines of all ranks, as well as a goodly sprinkling of natives of the village. At a table in the center of the room Private Haskell, one of the recent men to join the company, was holding forth in louder tones than usual.

"But I tell you it's true," he had exclaimed, in evident desire to force home some previous statement. "It's true because I've seen it in writing."

"In writing?" questioned one of his auditors. "How do you mean in writing?"

"Why, in a letter, of course, you boob. A letter written to Doyle himself, and from a feller who went to school with both of 'em."

"How in the world did you ever come to see such a letter as that?" asked another.

"Never you mind how I come to see it, but I did, and this feller come right out and said that this here Captain Comstock actually played a low trick on Doyle."

"Ah, say, Bo, that thing happened years and years ago, so what's the good of bringing it up again. If Captain Dick ever did such a thing, and

mind you, I don't believe it in spite of your letter —I say, if he did do it when he was a kid, it's no sign he'd do a stunt like that now. Why, he's proved time and again to us and to everybody that knows him, that he's a he-man through and through. What's the idea anyway, in your telling such rotten tales? What's your grudge? I can't see."

"No, maybe you can't, but then again maybe you ain't never been soaked a court by him for doin' nothin', either, as I've been."

"Do you mean because he punished you for being under the influence of liquor the other evening and raising all that disturbance in your billet about midnight?"

"That's just what I mean, and besides he knows as well as I do that I wasn't drunk. It's only because he don't like me and because I had Friedrich Hoffman up there along with me that he awarded me that summary.[1] Hoffman told me as well as he could in his broken English that Captain Comstock's been layin' for him ever since he came back here, merely because the poor devil was forced to fight against his will in the German army. Anyhow Hoffman never fought against us Americans. He was over on the Russky side all the time. Ain't that so, Friedrich?" and the speaker called out to the ex-soldier, who was returning from a near-by

[1] Summary Court-Martial.

table where he had been serving some of the other customers.

"Vat, dat is so?" inquired Friedrich, as he paused with his tray held before him.

"I said, ain't that true about you never fighting against us—against the United States soldiers—the Yanks?"

"Jah, I aind't fight mit dem effert yet. I loave der Yank like a goot vun. I vould not neffer wid der American fight none."

"See, I told you so," and Haskell turned again to his audience.

"That's not the story I heard," said an old-timer, Corporal Breen, looking up at Friedrich inquiringly. "The story I heard was that you told the Captain, the day you came here to report, that you fought against us at Belleau Wood, and that you were wounded there and after your recovery and release from the hospital you fought against the American Army in several other places."

"I make vun bet, that your Captain iss much mad mit me, when he told such a gros mistake," said Friedrich, a little hotly. "It iss vun joke."

By now several men had joined the group, as the loud words had attracted general attention.

"Joke nothing, you poor Dutchman! Captain Dick Comstock don't joke about people like you, so you'd better watch your tongue or with your

newly-acquired English or lack of it, you'll likely be hanging yourself some of these fine days."

"For two cents I'd crown you good and plenty, you fresh dub."

The words were as clear, quick and concise as any Yankee boy in the big room could have spoken them, for Friedrich in his sudden flare of anger had forgotten entirely his former broken, halting method of speech.

By the majority of men present the words would have passed unnoticed, the minority believed them merely another American expression the German had recently acquired from his intimate contact with the Marines, but not so Corporal Breen who had noticed the way Friedrich uttered the words, and had also seen the ugly look in the fellow's eyes.

In an instant Breen was on his feet. With a swift sweep of his left arm he had knocked the tray full of glasses and dishes out of Friedrich's hands, and as they crashed to the floor, the marine's brawny right fist shot out, came in contact with the ex-soldier's angry face with such force that he was sent staggering backward toward the little counter, behind which Frau Hoffman stood waving her fat arms futilely in the hope of attracting her son's attention, for her quick intuition had told her that trouble was brewing in the air.

The sprinkling of Germans in the room, not un-

derstanding what had passed between the two men, immediately believed that their townsman had been assaulted for no cause whatever by the marine, and their rancor, never far beneath the surface, immediately burst forth. A stein came hurtling through the air aimed at Corporal Breen's head, followed by another, and in a second more the public room of the old inn was a scene of wildness long to be remembered.

Glasses and dishes flew back and forth, striking the rafters overhead and shattering to the floor; tables were overturned, chairs were smashed. There was a rushing to and fro, as the Germans tried to join forces, and in the center of the room was an indescribable jumble of fists, long-stemmed pipes, arms, legs, bottles, table-cloths, human bodies, sore heads, Germans and marines. Shouts and roars, grunts and growls, curses and yells, and then a couple of pistol shots and another, while smoke and powder fumes filled the nostrils.

Suddenly the outer door was flung open and into the fighting mass came two new actors—a flaming-haired captain of the U. S. Army and a heavily-built, powerful, Irish First Sergeant of Marines.

Even above the din of battle the voices of these newcomers rose in stentorian tones.

"Here, stop this fighting. Stand back there.

Get out of here. Hey, you, let go that German's whiskers."

"Lay still, yer spalpeen, or I'll be for landin' of a stiff punch in yer bread-baskit. Take that, ye liver-faced Heinie, and be fer gettin' to yer corner if ye know on which side yer bread's buttered. Put up them guns, ye fools."

And as order was almost being fairly restored, came a rush of hobnailed shoes along the roadway and into the inn crowded a score of marines with the Officer of the Day, Lieutenant Hall, at their head.

It did not take long to hustle the fighters out into the street and down in the direction of the guard-house, and just as the final combatant was escorted through the door, a very stout old German woman squeezed out from behind two large casks standing in a corner, wringing her hands and weeping inconsolably, as she gazed upon the scene of carnage.

"Where is my boy? Where is my little Friedrich? He must be killed. They have murdered him. I am ruined. I am ruined," she wailed.

"What's she sayin', sir?" inquired Dorlan of the army officer.

"She wants to know where her son is—her little boy."

"Her little boy, indeed. Begorra, he was probably at the bottom of the hull wurrks, but if he was here I didn't see the scoundrel, did you, sir?"

"No, I didn't see any little boy," answered the officer.

"Little boy—I'm tellin' yer, sir, he's a grown man—a ex-soldier of that there German arrmy we was foightin' a few weeks back; but speakin' of foightin', Captain, if I do be for sayin' of it meself as what shouldn't, I'm thinkin' the two of us is a pretty loively pair when it comes to real action, sir."

"Right-o, Mike," came the smiling answer, as the Captain looked admiringly at the old non-com, "but I guess we couldn't have done much more if the guard hadn't come along to the rescue when they did." Then turning to the Officer of the Day he held out his hand and said, "I am Captain Percy Doyle, Lieutenant, and I fought with this company of Marines at Belleau Wood."

"I am pleased to meet you, Captain Doyle," said Hall, taking the proffered hand, "but I want to apologize for the reception your old company tendered you just now, and assure you that this is not a regular, every-day occurrence."

"If it were," said Reddy, "I would have to make my calls on Dick Comstock in the future arrayed in football togs or a suit of armor," and he gazed rather ruefully at the sleeves of his coat which were nearly torn from the shoulders and hanging by a few shreds.

"Say, Capt'in, yer arrm's bleedin'; didn't ye know it?" exclaimed Mike, who now saw for the first time a streak of red tinging the white sleeve of Doyle's shirt. "Did ye get cut, sir?"

"Oh, it's nothing," said Reddy, carelessly, nevertheless pinching hard on his left arm above the elbow. "I believe one of those fool bullets grazed it when they were ricochetting around the room. It's lucky no one was really injured." Then turning to Lieutenant Hall he asked:

"Where is Captain Dick, Lieutenant?"

"I'm expecting him back at any moment, sir. He left here early this morning with his sister and her friends to visit one of the old castles located a few kilometers up the river. They are leaving here to-morrow morning for Brest—his sister and friends are, I mean."

"Miss Comstock—Ursula Comstock is here?" queried Reddy. "I surely will be glad to see her again. I've not seen Dick's sister since the day he and I graduated from the old high school back home."

"Then ye've a treat fer sore eyes ahead of ye, sir," blurted Old Mike, forgetting himself in his enthusiasm. "Little Miss Marie is a hummer when it comes to looks, but ye'll believe me when I tell ye that Miss Ursula with that light hair of hers, black eyebrows and lashes, and them bluest of blue

eyes, has got 'em all left at the post, sir, and I haven't been sailin' all over this here globe all these years and not be for knowin' what I'm ——"

"And for that remark, Sergeant Mike Dorlan, I'll give you this," came a happy, laughing voice, and the next moment two very red lips barely touched the veteran's grizzled cheek; "you see, Captain Doyle," continued Ursula, who with Marie and Mr. and Mrs. Faure had come quietly into the room in time to hear the sergeant's eulogy, "you see, Mike is so loyal to me that he would not dare say anything else," and still laughing the tall girl held out her hand in greeting.

"I am glad indeed to see you, Miss Comstock, but regret that the years have made you forget that my name is just—Reddy."

"Then I demand a corresponding recognition of my own first name, Reddy, and now let me introduce you to my friends."

But just as Ursula turned, Reddy Doyle suddenly realized that the "mere scratch" on his arm was something more than he had believed it to be, for the loss of blood during this meeting had not been noticed, and right in the nick of time Mike Dorlan caught him as he was swaying, and gently assisted him to a near-by chair, while he called quietly for a glass of water. In another moment Ursula had torn the first-aid packet from Dorlan's

belt, and with Marie's able assistance was deftly binding up the wounded arm.

And this was the scene which greeted the unbelieving eyes of Dick and Tommy when they burst into the room a minute or two later.

CHAPTER XVII

PRIVATE HASKELL CONFESSES

The sudden blocking of the waning light from the doorway made both girls look in that direction and in the same breath exclaim:

"It's Dick!"

"What's the trouble now?" Dick asked, as he strode up to the group. "Is someone hurt?"

"Yes, Dick, it is Reddy Doyle," answered Ursula. "One of the bullets grazed his arm. He has lost quite a little blood and has fainted; but I cannot believe that this scratch, so to speak, is the real cause. We ought to have the doctor here at once."

"Reddy Doyle?" questioned Dick, wonderingly. "He—here ——" then turning to Tommy, who was standing at his elbow, "On the double, Tommy, give Doctor Cathcart my compliments, and tell him to leave those men in the brig to the care of his apprentice and come up here at once," and off dashed Tommy on his mission, while Dick silently lent his aid with the wounded man.

By the time the surgeon had arrived, Doyle was recovering consciousness. The naval medical of-

ficer attached to Dick's company took one look at Reddy and ordered that he be put to bed at once.

"You were right, Miss Comstock, it is something more than that stray bullet. Captain Doyle has in some way opened up an old wound and he will need rest and quiet for some days to come. I wonder how he did it."

"Bedad, Docther, ye'd not be wonderin' about the matter at all, at all, had ye been in this here boardin'-house about fifteen minutes ago and seen the Capt'in in action, sir. The way he was a-slingin' them fat Heinies around his head like as if they was injun clubs would 'a' made ye sit up and take notice, I'm thinkin'," volunteered Old Mike, and Reddy, in spite of his weakness, could not forego a faint smile at the sergeant's evident pride in his prowess.

"I'll see that Frau Hoffman prepares a room at once," said Dick, as he hurried off in search of the old *hausfrau*.

He found her sitting on the stairs leading to the upper floor of the inn, wiping her eyes on her calico apron and loudly lamenting her losses.

"Stop your crying, Frau Hoffman," said Dick, feeling sorry indeed for the fat old lady. "I will see that you are fully repaid for all the damage my men have caused, but now you must hasten and prepare a room for one of our officers who was

wounded during the fracas. He is weak from loss of blood, caused by the opening of an old wound, and the surgeon orders that he be put to bed at once."

"But Mein Herr Captain-Commandant, I have no vacant rooms in the house. Your sister and her friends and my Friedrich have the only guest rooms in the establishment, Mein Herr. I am sorry, but this is but a small tavern and ——"

"Then your Friedrich must give up his room for to-night," answered Dick authoritatively. "We cannot wait. The officer must not be moved further than is absolutely necessary and by to-morrow night my sister and her friends will have left for France. Your son will be incommoded for one night only."

"But he—Friedrich will be angry with me—he will not allow ——"

Dick waited to hear nothing further. "Go and get the room in order immediately," he said sternly, and this time the old woman knew there was no use offering further objections, she had lived in a military country too long to mistake that tone, so, turning, she waddled up the stairs shaking her head and muttering to herself.

By this time there was the sound of shuffling steps as along the passageway came the surgeon, Mr. Faure, Mike and Tommy carrying the patient.

Dick himself lent a hand and even the two girls assisted them up the narrow stairway and until the door of Friedrich's room was reached. Here they were met by Frau Hoffman, still looking very much worried and uncertain. She pointed silently to the spotless bed, the coverlid of which she had already turned down for its new occupant, and then retired to her room below.

It was not long before Reddy was established between the clean sheets and feeling so fit that he tried to engage Dick in conversation while the doctor and his one assistant dressed the old wound properly and replaced the first-aid bandage, which Ursula and Marie had so deftly applied, with another and more suitable dressing.

"I say, Dick. I've not had a chance yet to tell you ——" began the patient, then noticing the expression of Dick's face, as that young man turned from the window through which he had been gazing, Reddy immediately knew that anything he had to say was not welcomed by this old schoolmate. He hesitated. After a short pause he began again, but this time the little life and spirit that had been in his voice and manner had changed unaccountably.

"I have not yet had the opportunity, Captain Comstock, to explain to you how it happens I am here in your town, but ——"

"Pardon, Captain Doyle,"—it was the brisk voice of the surgeon interrupting—"but all explanations must wait until to-morrow, sir. I must first see how you are in the morning and until then must forbid any conversation. I want you to get a good night's rest, and I want that rest to start right now."

"But Doctor, I must tell Dick ——" began Reddy.

"Sorry, sir, it will have to wait," and there was no denying the decisive words and manner as the doctor began putting away his instruments. A minute or two later he had quietly cleared the room, leaving Reddy alone in charge of the hospital corpsman.

Outside in the hall he met Dick who had waited for him and explained that any further talk or excitement for the next few hours would be most disastrous to the patient and might result in a long sickness, whereas a good sleep would prove the best tonic in the world and serious complications might be avoided.

Since Dick first recognized Doyle as he stepped through the doorway of the public room a half-hour before he had not directly addressed his old-time schoolmate. At the sight of him there arose in the mind's eye of the marine officer the last time he and Reddy had been together. All too clearly

he recalled the bitter, accusing words of this old rival, and those words cut as deeply now as they did at the time they were uttered.

In quick succession the rest of that long indictment which he had builded during the past months followed. He recalled the night at the little Belgian village; the struggle in the home of Monsieur Flammeau; the escape of Suzette's assailant over the high wall in rear of the house; the papers which he had picked up addressed to Reddy Doyle; the fact of Doyle's company being but a few kilometers distant and the presence of some of his men in the town, and then, too, there was the matter of the German spy whom Reddy vouched for during that first night of the fighting near Belleau Wood or the *Bois de la Brigade de Marine* as it was now called.

All these things had passed in unbidden review, as Dick stood watching his sister and Marie so gently ministering to the needs of the wounded man. How he hated to see these two girls even touch him, let alone display so much solicitude as to his welfare. He felt it was almost sacrilege to allow them to keep on in their humane work, knowing as he did all these unexplained accusations. True he also remembered the message Dorlan had delivered from Reddy after the fight in which he had been knocked out, but he believed it was all

sarcasm on Doyle's part and he even resented Mike's recent encomiums of Doyle's prowess.

For years Dick had given Reddy the benefit of every doubt, and even with the knowledge of the things he now possessed he had tried hard to find excuses—some mitigating circumstances, in Doyle's favor, but the account was too much for him to strike an even balance.

It was a great relief to him, therefore, when the surgeon insisted on installing a hospital corpsman as nurse after kindly refusing the offers of both the girls to take charge of the patient. It was while he was going over all this in his mind that Ursula's voice interrupted his deep reverie.

"Why so solemn, Dickie dear?" she said as she hooked her arm in his and steered him into the small room which did duty as a parlor in the suite occupied by Frau Hoffman's guests. "Cheer up, old boy; you look as if you'd lost your very best friend in the world. Reddy will be all right in a day or two or three."

"Doyle's condition isn't worrying me," replied Dick, rather gloomily.

"Oh, never mind him, Ursula. He's been glum all day," remarked Tommy, who had risen as the two entered the room. "Don't bother about him, I say. Besides, I'm getting jealous. No one seems to take any notice of how serious I've been myself,

and who could help not being so with all of you leaving at noon to-morrow. Gosh—I'd give a lot to be going along, too. I'll bet it's some fine back home right now—skating and sleighing, and Mother's mince pies,—why, I'd turn back handsprings from here to Berlin just to be able to tackle some real, New England-cooked corned-beef and cabbage, and I've seen the time when Dad used to threaten me with dire punishment if I did not clean up my plate when we had a 'boiled dinner,' I hated it so. But when you say baked beans—boy—there's where I'd shine. U-mm-mm-h!"

"Listen to him, Ursula," said Marie; "why, I can easily recall a time in Paris not so long ago when Tommy had a hard time convincing the doctors and everybody else within hearing that his only desire in life was to remain in Europe forever. In fact they tried their best to drive him aboard a homeward bound transport but without success."

"Ah, that's a horse of another color," defended Tommy. "At that time we needed men—fighting men on this side of the pond, so what was the sense in sending a well man home just to bring him back again later on? Now you see it's slower and deadlier than a spiritualistic summer camp meeting and not a single chance of it getting anything but worse in the future. It's deadly."

"What would you say, youngster, if I told you that I have your commanding general's authority in my pocket at this very moment, which orders you back to the United States?" questioned Mr. Faure, with an air of seriousness, as he reached inside the breast pocket of his coat and then hesitated before withdrawing his hand.

Tommy's face was a study. He flushed and stammered as he looked appealingly about the room.

"Why,—I'd ——" he swallowed a lump in his throat and began again. "Why, I'd—I'd—I'd ask the—the general, sir, to please—to please not—let you take that hand out, sir."

Everyone, of course, laughed heartily and Mr. Faure, withdrawing his hand empty, stated:

"Cheer up, young man. I have not any such order with me, but if you want to go, my boy, just say the word, and ——"

"On second thought, sir,—on second thought, I believe I'd rather just sort of stick it out until I'm sure the party's all over, and that there isn't any more pie, sir."

"Could you really have it fixed, Father?" questioned Marie, turning eagerly to her parent.

"I really could, my dear, and if I believed that either Dick or Tommy would have appreciated such a step I might have arranged it, but I feared

I would not have been thanked for my trouble should either of them have found me out."

"And you could fix it for Dick to go also, did you say?" and this time Marie dropped her glance to the floor and then her big eyes slyly stole a look at Dick's face, but there was no time for Mr. Faure to answer her question as both Dick and Tommy immediately had questions to ask that were far removed from home-going transports, and thus the trend of the conversation was safely steered into other channels. A little later the party broke up, leaving the two young men to go to their quarters and prepare for the supper to which they had been invited by the departing guests.

On descending to the public room of the tavern they found that a police party from the company had nearly restored the place to its former state of orderliness. Nearly all evidence of the recent fracas had disappeared and a few patrons were again gathering about the tables to discuss in low tones the events of the afternoon.

On his way to the door Dick paused a moment to speak to the old landlady.

"I wish you would tell your son to report to me at my office at once, Frau Hoffman, and have him bring with him the bill for the damage my men have done," he said.

"My Friedrich, he is not here, sir Captain. No

one has seen him since the trouble. He is not among those arrested and I am terribly worried and anxious. Who knows, he may have been wounded and wandered away. Possibly he is even now in need of assistance. Oh, what am I going to do?" and the old lady began another spell of weeping and lamentation.

Feeling decidedly awkward, Dick excused himself as soon as it was possible and hastened to his quarters where he immediately began an investigation into the causes leading to the fighting. After lengthy interviews with civilians as well as with his own men he could draw but one conclusion—that the real instigator of the row was none other than the landlady's son, and it was undoubtedly the fear of some drastic action being taken against him which caused Friedrich's present absence.

Dick also found out that many men of the company had been allowed to run up large bills in the tavern—"jaw bone" it is called in the service—and this, too, caused him much annoyance, for in the official report he would have to write it could not help but appear that he, Dick Comstock, had failed miserably in the smooth management of affairs within his designated area. It was a sad blow to his pride because up to now he felt that he had good reason to be quite elated over the conduct of

his men and his own administration of things in general.

"In case Friedrich Hoffman returns he is to be arrested and brought to me at once," he told the Officer of the Day, "and I want you to have a thorough search made for him immediately in the village and vicinity."

Even as he finished giving the order there was the sound of loud talking outside the door. A knock followed and in strode First Sergeant Dorlan, holding by the collar of his coat a cowering marine, and one whom the old sergeant had been handling none too gently if the fellow's appearance was an index of what he had passed through.

"Here's a bit of evvydence that'll be for throwin' some loight on the matter, sir, but fer the life of me I can't be sayin' if it clears up annything," announced Mike. Then giving his prisoner a shake, he said: "Now speak up, ye shnake in m'rine's clothin' and tell the Capt'in what ye know, and be-dad, ye'd better be for tellin' of it mighty straight, I'm advisin'."

It was apparent that Mike was pretty much excited, for his manner in the presence of Dick and the Officer of the Day was far from that military control for which the old fellow was noted, but it was forceful and effective to say the least. But it was only for a moment or so that Mike lost his

head, for suddenly he realized the situation and dropping his hold from the man's collar he came to attention and reported.

" This here man is Private Haskell, sir, who recently j'ined from the replacement camp at Brest. I found out to-day, sir, that this afternoon this man was repeating a lot of stories about ——"

Dorlan stopped. Then he opened his mouth to speak, but no sound came from his lips.

" About what, Sergeant? " questioned Dick.

Old Mike looked up at the ceiling, down at the floor, everywhere but in Captain Dick's face. Little drops and beads of perspiration began to stand out on his forehead as he endeavored to find the words he wished to use.

" Why, sir,—stories about—about Captain Doyle and yerself, sir."

" Well, what were the stories? "

" Just a pack of lies, sir. All the old men of the company knows that, Misther Dick, and it seems that this here Haskell was tellin' of 'em at the *gastwirtschaft* this afternoon and ——"

" But what were the stories—these lies? " persisted Dick, interrupting.

" Oh, they weren't nothin' at all, sir," replied the ill-at-ease sergeant. " Nothin' at all, sir, so ——"

" Sergeant Dorlan," interrupted Dick again, but kindly, " I must know these stories or lies as you

call them, if I am to act in an intelligent manner in any report you have to make against Private Haskell, consequently you will have to tell me them at once or else I will have to dismiss the case."

It was hard work for Old Mike, but he was a soldier through and through and never had been known to shirk his duty nor disobey an order from his superior, thereupon he briefly related the tales which had circulated soon after Doyle had joined Dick's company nearly a year before and which were being retold by Haskell.

During the recital Dick listened attentively, but it was a trying fifteen minutes for all those present in the office. When Mike finished Dick began questioning the slouchy looking marine.

"Where did you tell the First Sergeant you heard these stories?"

"I heard them first from Friedrich Hoffman, sir," came the answer.

"Do you speak German?"

"No, sir, Hoffman talked to me in English."

"Where did he state that he had heard them?"

"He said he knew Captain Doyle years ago when the Captain used to make business trips to Germany, and that when he was demobilized he had gone to Cologne where he met the Captain again, and on telling him that he, Hoffman, was returning to this town, Captain Doyle warned him

to look out for you, sir," answered Haskell, who, now that Dorlan's heavy hand no longer squeezed at his neck, was beginning to recover some of his erstwhile braggadocio and insolence.

"Why did you repeat these stories on the strength of what an enemy told you?"

"Well—I—er ——"

"Speak up and tell the Capt'in what ye told me," and Dorlan's look and words had their effect.

"I was paid for doing it," he said, in a low whimpering tone.

"How were you paid?"

"I didn't have to pay for anything I got at the tavern."

"If the Capt'in will be allowin' me to speak, sir, I kin tell ye the whole story in a nutshell," said Dorlan, and with Dick's nod of acquiescence he continued.

"It was like this, sir. This man Haskell has been gettin' all his dhrinks and chow at the tavern fer nothin' and also acted as a runner fer the place. On his part he began spreadin' these here stories, sir, in order to undermine yer authority in the village and among the men. He was up to some of his dirty wurrk this afternoon, and one of the old-timers in the comp'ny called him for it, and then Haskell called on this here Heinie, Hoffman, to back him up, and that's where the foight started.

But that isn't all the story, sir. Durin' the foight Hoffman and Haskell sneak out the back door and make their getaway. They beat it down the alley to the comp'ny quarters to talk matters over and Hoffman tells him he wants to get away and asks him to loan him some of his uniforms and offered him fifty dollars fer a suit, but as he didn't have the money to give Haskell, Haskell refused and just about then they heard the men coming back to the quarters and Hoffman ran off. Haskell also states that Hoffman claims now that he is not a German, that he's an American soldier, and that he kin talk English as good as annybody in the outfit."

"Is this true?" inquired Dick of the private.

"Yes, sir, that's the whole truth," came the reply.

"I'll continue this investigation in the morning, Sergeant, and in the meantime Private Haskell will be restricted to his quarters until I send for him," and rising, Dick left the office and went upstairs to his room, where Tommy had preceded him and was already getting ready to attend this last dinner party with Ursula and the Faures.

As Dick, too, began cleaning up after a few words with his friend, he suddenly bethought himself of the letters which he had picked up on that memorable night in Belgium. Going to his desk he unlocked a small drawer and drew them forth,

then sitting down read them from beginning to end.

"So Reddy and Friedrich Hoffman knew one another before this war broke out, did they? Hu-u-m-ph! And that is why Doyle was protecting this German the night before the battle began at Belleau Wood,—I'll say this is a difficult skein to unravel. I wish ——" but he got no further in his musings, for at that moment clear on the frosty air there came borne to his ears the barking of a Colt's automatic pistol and then the unmistakable crack-crack-crack-crack-crack of a Springfield rifle as the bullets from a clip of cartridges voiced in rapid succession their answering challenge.

CHAPTER XVIII

MIKE MISSES THE TARGET

When Corporal Breen's fist came in contact with the nose of Friedrich Hoffman at the beginning of the fight in the *gastwirtschaft* the blow sent the German staggering backward toward the door leading out of the room to the rear of the house. As Hoffman scrambled to his feet he made a dive for this door, and in doing so bumped into Private Haskell who was crawling on his hands and knees from the midst of the struggling mass of marines and Germans.

"Come on, let's get out of this mess in a hurry," said the German.

Together they clambered through the opening and closed the door after them. Making their way down the passage into the enclosure at the back, they paused for a moment to catch their breath.

"The guard and the rest of the company will be coming up in a minute; we had better get away from here," said Friedrich, while they listened to the muffled sounds of conflict coming from the front of the building. "I gave myself away when I forgot I was supposed not to know English, and

"I Have Come for Some Money"

that Corporal Breen will not forget it either. I've got to beat it to the tall timber, else they'll put me in the jug."

"How can they put you in the jug for that?"

"Well, I guess I'm still classed as a deserter," was the surprising reply.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Haskell, not fully understanding Hoffman's remark.

"Don't know yet, but it's not safe for me to be roaming around the country without some sort of a uniform on. Come on down to your quarters and fit me out. I'll pay you and no one will see us if we hasten."

As Haskell was about to step around the corner of the tavern, Hoffman pulled him back and pointed down the street toward two men approaching on the run.

"Look out, here come some of them now. It's Dorlan and an officer—an army officer. Come on —hustle!" and without further stopping they started running down the lane, keeping under cover from observation as much as possible.

Arriving at the building, a good sized storehouse, in which Haskell and over half of the company had their billets, they found the place empty as Hoffman had predicted.

It took but a few moments for them to select a coat here, a pair of trousers there, leggins, overseas

cap, shoes and khaki shirt. Then as they were about to leave another thought came to the German's mind.

"Look here, Haskell, break into the gun locker and snitch me a Colt's and some ammunition. No one will see you."

"Not on your life, Bo," answered the wary Haskell.

"Twenty dollars now and twenty more to-night when I can come back after dark without being discovered and get at my funds," said Hoffman, and he held out a flat package of small denomination United States bank notes. "Come on, Haskell, do me a good turn. You'll not be sorry. It's safe enough, but you'll have to hurry if you want to get these iron men."

Haskell's cupidity was too much for his caution. "I'll meet you as soon as possible over in the deserted barn where the gang used to get together sometimes. You had better go on over there now and shift your clothes," he said, and then disappeared in the direction of the company armory.

The armory and the guard quarters of the company were in the same building and Haskell approached it warily, knowing that some member of the guard would be on duty, and he did not wish to be seen in the vicinity for fear his name would be brought up when the theft of the pistol should

be discovered. He was right in his surmise, for the guard was standing near the front door but gazing interestedly up the street in the direction of the inn.

Making his way to the rear entrance Haskell was soon inside the room where the pistols not in actual use were kept locked in a stout chest secured by hasp and padlock. Grabbing a bayonet from its scabbard hanging to a rack placed against the wall he inserted the point beneath the hasp and with a quick wrench tried to draw forth the staples. The first effort slightly loosened the hasp. The second broke the blade of the weapon across its center, but this gave him in reality a stouter and more effective jimmy. The third trial was successful and hastily raising the lid of the box he selected the first weapon he saw and slipped two extra clips of cartridges into his pocket.

From up the street came the sound of footsteps and voices. He had no time to lose. Sliding the pistol under his coat and inside his trousers-belt, he replaced the lid, turned the box around so that the broken lock was toward the wall, and silently made his way out as he had come.

To go directly to the rendezvous from the guard-house would expose him to the view of the men returning from the inn. It would be the safer course to first go to his company billet, pass through the

building and then by a side door reach the alley-way in rear. He had no thought that he himself was liable to be arrested, and was greatly surprised when, on entering the large room, one of the men who occupied a bunk near the door hailed him.

"I say, Haskell, the O. D.'s lookin' for you."

"What does he want of me?"

"Dunno, feller, but I just heard him talkin' with Corporal Breen, and he said to bring you to the brig if you was in your quarters. The Sergeant of the guard's coming back here just as soon as he locks up the men who were fightin' up to the inn. What's the matter? Wasn't you around when the company turned out a bit ago? There's the deuce to pay! Big row up to Hoffman's joint between some of our men and a bunch of these here square heads. You'd oughter been there to see it. I got there ——"

But his listener waited to hear no more. He hastened across the room, stepped outside and almost into the arms of Corporal Breen.

"You're wanted down at the guard-house, Haskell," announced the corporal. "I'm wanted myself, so I'll go along with you."

For the fraction of a second Private Haskell was at a loss as to what he should do. If he was to be arrested and put in the brig, the pistol and ammunition which he had on his person was sure to

be discovered when he was searched as a preliminary to his incarceration. It was absolutely necessary to first get rid of this evidence of his theft.

"Be with you in just a second," he said, and turned back into the quarters.

It was no easy thing to secretly slip the cartridges and pistol under his pillow without being observed, for by now the room was filling up with occupants, but he accomplished it successfully and a second or two later was on his way to report, with Breen walking by his side.

Arriving at the guard-house it was some time before he was called in to be interrogated by the officer of the day and when he did finally appear it was a very much perturbed young man who stood at attention before his superior and answered the searching questions put to him.

In the meantime Mike Dorlan had returned and was listening to Haskell's answers with interest, and finally when the private was dismissed Mike followed him out of the room. Out in the hallway the old sergeant's heavy hand fell suddenly on Haskell's shoulder.

"Not so fast, me buck," and Haskell found himself twirled about so rapidly, and face to face with the sergeant, that his head was dizzy. "Now ye tell me in a hurry all ye know about this here foight —and mind ye, no lies or I'll be lambastin' ye," and

this time Haskell told a tale which if not strictly the truth passed muster and which he hoped would at last let him free. But in this he was mistaken, for by now Captain Dick had begun his investigation, and, as we have seen, Haskell was sent to his quarters to remain there until further notice.

It was therefore nearly dark before he had an opportunity to slip out unobserved to carry out his promise to Friedrich Hoffman, impatiently awaiting him in the deserted barn.

"I began to think you never were going to get here," said Hoffman, angrily. "Have you brought the gun?"

"I came near not getting here," answered the marine surlily. "If I didn't need that money mighty bad to send to my mother back home, I never would have chanced it."

"Tell me what happened," said Hoffman, a little mollified.

Thereupon Haskell related what had occurred. When he ended Hoffman said:

"And there is another reason why I can't hang around this dump any longer in safety. By the way, here is the twenty dollars. I'll give you the rest when I have made a visit to the inn a little later; after things quiet down a bit around the place."

Haskell took the money, counted it carefully and stowed it away in his coat pocket before he inquired:

"Another reason? And what's that?"

"Well, I happen to know that red-headed army officer who came running up to the inn with the Top, and he knows me too, and would hang me higher than a kite if he got the chance!"

"Where'd you ever know him? What's his name?"

"His name is Doyle. He's the guy I've been telling you about. The one who used to be a lieutenant in this company and licked your precious Captain. I used to be employed in the Athletic Club to which this man Doyle belonged in 'little Ole N'York,' and he'd recognize me right off the bat. You see I lived in the United States for about ten years before the war began—in fact I'm an American citizen."

"You are!" exclaimed Haskell. "Why, I thought you were a German and when you spoke of deserting, a little while ago, I thought you meant deserting from the German army. Say, I guess I told the Captain the truth and didn't know it, when I said you was an American."

"I would have been in the German army if it hadn't been for this same Dick Comstock's father. It's too long a story to tell you now, but his old man is one of those blundering fool war committees of

some kind in New York, and when I appeared before him on being drafted and tried to prove to him that I couldn't go to war, he investigated and reported adversely on my case. He nearly had me put in jail.

"If I had not enlisted right when I did I would have been sent to one of the internment camps as a spy. It was a case of choosing the better of two evils. Naturally I was not going to fight my own people, so when I got over here I deserted as soon as I could and joined the army of the Fatherland."

"So that's why you've got it in for Captain Dick, eh?" questioned Haskell, rising from the box on which he had been sitting and lazily stretching himself.

"Oh, that is not all," grumbled Hoffman, clumsily re-rolling one of his puttee leggings over which he had been laboring when Haskell entered the barn. "Dick Comstock almost killed me in Belleau Wood during the fighting there. I had thrown up my hands in surrender, but he plugged me just the same. They can talk about dirty German tactics all they want, but that's about as low down a trick a man can play, to shoot a fellow after he has thrown down his gun, and that is what your honorable Captain did to me—shooting a defenseless man, and ——"

Friedrich tucked in the tape at the top of the

spiral and straightened up to finish his sentence. In the meantime Haskell had edged a little closer to him, and just as Hoffman turned he saw the marine make a sudden lunge to secure the Colt's pistol lying on the top of the German's discarded pile of clothing.

Friedrich Hoffman never completed what he was about to say, but with a catlike spring he violently pushed Haskell to one side and seizing the pistol in his right hand he brought it down with a sickening thud on his opponent's head, just as Haskell had partly recovered his balance and made another lunge to secure the weapon.

With a crash the American fell to the dirt floor of the barn bleeding and unconscious from an ugly wound on his temple.

"*Schwinehund,*" muttered the German, "meant to do me dirt too, did he? I believe my telling him the truth for once made him decide to arrest me himself. Humph—guess I'll have to hand it to him, after all. He did have some patriotism, the dog."

He now turned the body over violently with his foot, and bending over it in the dimming light began muttering again:

"His sudden spurt will do him little good now, and there will be one less interfering Yankee on this side of the Rhine in a few minutes, I guess.

Well, Friend Haskell, you won't need that money where you're going," and with the words he took from the marine's coat pocket the twenty dollars which a few minutes before he had paid over. Next he removed the identification tag from Haskell's neck, gathered up the few valuables still remaining in the pockets of his victim, and after covering the dying man with the old clothing and concealing all with loose hay from a pile near by, he cautiously made his way out of the barn and disappeared into the shadows of the near-by wood.

Less than fifteen minutes later as Frau Hoffman was preparing dinner for her guests, she was startled by a scratching sound at one of her kitchen windows. Upon looking up she saw the face of her son, his eyes staring at her through the glass. The old lady nearly dropped the spoon with which she was basting the roast. Silently the man outside signalled her to be cautious, and made further signs that she should open the door for him.

With beating heart she waddled to the door, unfastened the latch and the next moment Friedrich had entered, quickly closing and locking the portal behind him.

Drawing the old lady to a dim corner of the kitchen out of range of the windows he whispered hoarsely: " Tell me all that has occurred." Rapidly she related the events of which he was not cognizant.

"And Friedrich, that beast of a Captain-Commandant ordered me to put the wounded officer in your bed, and though I told him you must have your room he would not listen."

"Never mind that, now. I must leave here at once. I have come for some money. Give me all you have. I will need it to effect my escape. I must cross the river to-night."

At this Frau Hoffman began to weep again, but her son shook her with no gentle hand.

"Stop that or someone will hear you. Get the money right away. I tell you that every minute I stay here increases the danger and decreases my chances of escape. It will be difficult to pass the river patrol even now."

"But my son, I have only a few of these American dollars saved, as you well know, and in a day or two I must pay the bills ——"

"What do I care about the bills? What should you care when I tell you my life is in danger? Only a few dollars, you say—where is all the money paid to you by Monsieur Faure this very day? I believe you think more of your money than you do of your son."

For the first time in her long, worried life the old German woman realized that her son was one in name only. In a single second she forgot all the devotion and endearments she had lavished on him

in his youth; forgot the faith in him which she had cherished during his years of absence; forgot the affection and attention she had tendered him since his return, and in the place of all these came sincere and righteous indignation.

Regardless of the need for silence, the pent-up wrath within her broke forth in vigorous, forceful language, but only for a moment or two did her rising voice seem to charge the raftered room with its venom, for the next moment she found herself being forced, spluttering and struggling, backward into an old-fashioned, cane-seated armchair. In her surprise at this turn of affairs she sat with her mouth agape, looking amazedly at her boy, then as she was about to launch forth another tirade, a dirty dish-towel was stuffed into her mouth; her own capacious apron together with other towels torn hurriedly into strips were being used to bind her fast and motionless. No longer did she struggle; she was overcome with heart-hurt; and then as her unworthy offspring disappeared through the doorway from her sight, the old *hausfrau's* head fell weakly forward, and futile tears coursed silently down her fat cheeks.

It was Hoffman's intention to pass stealthily along the hall to his mother's room and there to rifle the old-fashioned, leather-covered trunk which he knew was the repository of the old lady's sav-

ings. As he closed the kitchen door and entered the passage which communicated with the upper stories of the house and the large front room of the inn, the door leading to this latter place likewise opened and closed to admit the burly form of First Sergeant Mike Dorlan.

The flickering hall lamp gave out a feeble ray of light, but even in the semi-darkness Mike recognized the marine uniform, and in surprise at seeing one of "his" men in that place at this hour, he stopped in amazement.

"An' what be ye doin' here?" he questioned. "Come here, me man, and let's be for havin' a look at yer phizzyognomy."

But the man down the hall did not move.

"Did ye hear me order? What are ye doin' back here, annyway?" he questioned, and now Mike was striding down the hall.

To make any further attempt to procure the money was out of the question, and Hoffman knew, too, that in a moment more Dorlan could not fail to recognize him. His one chance of escape was down the hall and out the rear door which once before this day Haskell and he had used, so, in the hope of stopping further inquiry and satisfying the sergeant, he answered gruffly:

"The old lady called me in to ask about her son. You'd better go in there and talk to her," and with

that he turned and made his way toward the door, hoping that Dorlan would enter the kitchen as he had suggested.

"Not so fast there, me son ——" began Mike, and then sharply, "Halt!"

Friedrich was by now within five or six feet of the door, and as Mike's challenge rang out he made a final rush for it.

Again came the sharp challenge:

"Halt!"

But now the German's hand was on the latch and he flung the door open wide.

A third time came the challenge, clear and cutting—decisive.

"Halt!"

Now the road ahead was clear and Friedrich sprang through the doorway and across the tavern yard. Then came the thunderous bang of the pistol which the old sergeant had whipped from its holster and the bullet went whizzing dangerously close to the head of the fleeing man. Gaining the shadow of the hedge, Friedrich stopped and turned to glance behind him; as he did so he saw the figure of Dorlan framed in the open door with the light behind him—a perfect silhouette target.

"Take that, you Irish brute," he muttered, and with the words the heavy pistol which he carried barked once, twice,—he noted that the form in the

doorway seemed to waver, and then as the hands went out to support it, the body appeared to slide gently to the door sill.

Waiting to see no more, Hoffman broke through the hedge and sped down the lane toward the river, and then it was that a member of the patrol on number four post, attracted by the sounds of the pistol firing, came running into the lane in time to empty his clip of cartridges at the fleeing figure of a man who failed to heed his challenge also, but back at the rear door of the tavern, Sergeant Mike Dorlan, still partially holding himself in a sitting position, while pressing his left hand hard against his left side, growled and grumbled at himself.

" Begorra, Mike Dorlan, ye're gettin' so old and blind that ye're missing the bull's-eye at less than twinty yarrds. Huh: if this keeps up Misther Dick'll be wantin' of a new top sargint, I'm thinkin'," and then the voice suddenly stopped, and the old gray head fell heavily against the panel of the open door.

CHAPTER XIX

WHY DOYLE CAME BACK

When the sound of shots broke the quiet of the prosaic old village, and Dick ran from his room, he called out to Tommy Turner:

"On the jump, Tommy, there's more trouble brewing," then down the stairs he went, three treads at a step, while behind him he heard his young subaltern close at his heels.

Already the villagers were emerging from their doorways and peering curiously up and down the roadway; while from the direction of the company quarters, back near the center of the town, came the sound of shouts and running feet as the marines answered the summons of the bugler sounding the call "to arms."

Pausing for a moment in the center of the road, Dick listened attentively, trying to determine from which direction the shots had been fired.

Lieutenant Hall, Officer of the Day, came running up to him, closely followed by the members of the guard.

"The shots were fired down by the inn, sir," he reported between breaths. "I've had 'call to arms' sounded, and Mr. Wilson is standing by with the rest of the company waiting for instructions. Some member of the patrol has called the corporal of the guard."

"He is calling again," exclaimed Dick, as faint in the distance came the words:

"The Guard! Post Number Four!"

"Go back and take charge of the company, Lieutenant Turner, and wait for further orders," said Dick, and then: "Come on with the guard, Lieutenant Hall. On the double, men," and off they went, while Tommy, much disgruntled because he could not go directly to the scene of action, returned to where the men were already formed in line and awaiting the next development in this most exciting of days.

On reaching the *gastwirtschaft* it became apparent that once again the interior of the inn was the center of interest. Through the open portal a crowd of citizens could be seen standing about the doorway at the back of the public room, all gazing down the hallway to the rear of the house.

Directing the guard to remain outside, Dick and Lieutenant Hall stepped into the room. At their entrance the group about the rear door drew silently away, while the two officers strode down the

dimly lighted passage. Then for the second time within a few hours, Dick looked upon a scene which began to assume a familiar, if not agreeable aspect, for, lying with his head supported on the knees of Ursula Comstock and with Marie Faure solicitously bending over him lay a wounded man.

In another moment Dick saw to his consternation that the man was none other than his faithful old friend, Sergeant Dorlan, and at Mike's side Marie's father was trying to staunch the flow of blood from an ugly wound.

"Why, Mike ——" began Dick, but his voice seemed to choke then and he could say nothing more.

"Hello, Misther Dick," began the old first sergeant, with a brave attempt at a welcoming smile on his rugged features, then remembering himself, his face straightened out while he endeavored to make his report as formal as he believed proper. "I have to report to ye, sir, that owin' to me bum eyesight—I let—a feller—escape, and ——" and that is as far as the report went, for with a sudden indrawn breath, Dorlan's eyelids fluttered shut, while his body seemed to sink even lower to the floor than before. Once again Old Mike had lost consciousness.

For a moment there was a silence which no one cared to break, then Marie, with her hand under

Dorlan's coat over the slowly fluttering heart, looked up into Dick's anxious face and as calmly as she could, though her own eyes were filled with unshed tears, she said:

"His heart is still beating, Dickie boy. I think it is only the loss of so much blood. Where is the doctor?"

And even as she said the words Doctor Cathcart entered, having been summoned by the hospital corpsman who had previously been left in charge of Reddy Doyle and whom Ursula had immediately despatched for the man of medicine when she discovered Dorlan lying on the doorstep a minute or two after the shots had so startled the inmates and patrons of the inn.

"Get your men in here and have him carried up-stairs at once," was the surgeon's urgent instruction, and then once more the corpsman was sent in a hurry down to the sick-bay to secure certain medicaments and bandages which the officer knew would be needed if he hoped to save the life of the faithful old marine.

"If this sort of thing keeps up, the *gastwirtschaft* will be a hospital in fact," remarked the officer of the day to Dick in an endeavor to get the young captain's mind off the serious happenings taking place in the room overhead, to which Dorlan had been taken. "It is queer," he continued, "what

has become of the old lady who runs the inn. Don't you think we had better look around a bit? I am sure that I smell something burning. Perhaps ——" but there was no need for further goading on his part as Dick came out of his sad reverie "with a snap."

"Give orders to the guard to surround the house and allow no one to leave here unless passed through personally by me—I mean no Germans. Also have the patrol on number four post report to me at once," he commanded, then lifting the latch to the kitchen door, he started to enter.

"Hello! The place is filled with smoke. The dinner is burning up," and in another moment he had removed the burning meats and vegetables from the range, and flung open the windows and doors.

Soon the draft thus created was clearing out the dense smoke and pungent fumes which had filled the room. By this time Lieutenant Hall had returned from his mission and it was he who first saw Frau Hoffman bound fast to her chair, her gray head still sunk dejectedly on her breast and her eyes tight closed.

"Look, sir, the old lady has been tied up and gagged."

Together they released the prisoner from her bonds. With the removal of the gag from her

mouth, and after a sup of water which Dick brought to her, her tongue became unloosed and she broke out into loud and rapid vituperations—so rapid, in fact, that in spite of his intimate knowledge of the language, Dick was able to catch only a word here and there; and while she raved, the fat old soul waddled about the room frantically waving the remnants of the apron, which had recently bound her own arms fast to the arms of the chair, to and fro in an endeavor to clear the atmosphere of the last vestiges of smoke.

Finally Dick took her kindly by the shoulders and arrested her mad flight.

"Stop—wait just a moment, Frau Hoffman, and tell me who tied you up in such a brutal manner? How did it all happen and why?"

"Tell you?" answered the old woman, scornfully. "I tell you nothing. The Americans have caused me naught but trouble for years. It is all your fault. Oh, how I wish our Kaiser were here; he would tell you."

"Was it an American, then, who treated you so roughly?" persisted Dick.

For a second only the old lady hesitated and then looking anywhere but into Dick's eyes, she replied in a vehement tone:

"Of course it was an American. Who else but one of your brutes would harm an old woman like

myself and heap such indignities upon her? It was one of your own men—one of your wonderful marines, I tell you."

"Why did he do such a thing? Who was he? What did he look like?"

"How should I know why, unless it was to rob me? Was not my back turned when he grabbed me as I was cooking at the fire? Did he not force a dirty rag down my throat and bind me hand and foot?"

As Dick was about to question her further, there came the sound of footsteps outside and the sergeant of the guard appeared at the threshold with Private Aiken in tow.

"Here is Private Aiken, sir, patrol on Number Four," he announced, "and he tells me that while patrolling the lane in rear and a few hundred yards to the east of the inn a while ago, he heard one shot from a Colt's automatic, followed in a short interval by a second and third shot. Immediately afterward, when Aiken was coming toward the inn on the double, sir, he saw a man in uniform run out into the lane and turn toward the river. He called on the fellow to halt, but he kept on going, so Aiken emptied his rifle in an endeavor to stop him. While Aiken was telling me his story, sir, I received word from Lieutenant Turner that all the men in the command are accounted for with the exception

of Sergeant Dorlan and Private Haskell. He also reports that someone has broken into the pistol locker and stolen a pistol and some ammunition."

"You and Aiken may wait outside for a while," said Dick, and then turning to the old lady he said, "Do you know Private Haskell of the Marines, Mein Frau? Was he the man who came here? He is absent from the company."

A gleam of malice crossed the old woman's features.

"Yes, yes! He is the man. Now I remember him perfectly. He used to come here frequently, and he owes me more money than he can pay," then turning away from Dick and addressing no one in particular, she fabricated a tale which would thoroughly clear her son of any suspicion. Once again the mother love for her boy had overcome her momentary spirit of revolt.

"I doubt if we can do much in the way of searching to-night," said Dick to his lieutenant. "You may have the guard removed from around the inn and allow the people to go on about their business. Have the river bank patrolled and notify the patrol boat to keep a sharp lookout. Tell Lieutenant Turner that I will be in the office presently where I wish to see all the officers. If Haskell is found he will be arrested, and you may dismiss the com-

pany, but I want all hands to remain in their billets for the rest of the night."

Having seen to other minor details, Dick slowly and thoughtfully climbed the stairs to learn from Ursula and Marie that Doctor Cathcart had stated that there might be a chance for Dorlan's life, and though he did not hold out much hope, the next few hours would tell the tale.

" Captain Doyle wants to see you, Dick," added Marie. " He is fully awake and says that he has something very important to tell you and no matter what the doctor says to the contrary he will get on much better if you will talk to him for a few moments."

" All right, I'll go in and see him, but I can't see what it is he wants to talk with me about," said Dick reluctantly.

When he entered the room he found Mrs. Faure sitting there, quietly conversing with the injured man. The lamp, turned down low on a center table, gave but a feeble light in the room, but even so Dick could not fail to notice the relieved look that came over Reddy's face when he saw his visitor. Mrs. Faure excused herself on Dick's arrival, after whispering in his ear to let the patient talk for a short time only and that she had administered a sedative powder in the hopes that Reddy would go

to sleep, but he insisted that he could not and would not until he had first seen Captain Dick.

Seating himself in the chair which Mrs. Faure had vacated, Dick began speaking quietly.

"I'm here, Captain Doyle, and will listen to anything you have to say, but I must caution you that I cannot stay long and you must not excite yourself, according to the doctor's ——"

"Doctors be hanged," exclaimed Reddy impatiently. "However, I'll not keep you long. You see, Dick, I've been invalided home. Got too much gas during one of those blooming fights along the Meuse-Argonne, I guess, and it's kind of raised the dickens with me all around. I tried to stick it out, but these fool doctors always come butting in and taking all the joy out of life with their darned diagnoses.

"Well, anyway, I asked for and received permission to come down here for the express purpose of seeing you before I left for the good, old U. S. A."

"Yes," came Dick's comment, but he was not particularly interested nor attentive. He could not dispel from his mind's eye the sad picture of his old friend and former bunkie, Mike Dorlan, now lying close to death's door in the room across the hall.

"Yes," reëchoed Doyle. "You see, Dick, I

wanted to tell you before I left this side how sorry I am for all the bitter things I have said and thought of you for these long years past. In the first place this war has made a very different man of me, Dick. It has taught me—well, I don't just know how to say it—but I've had my eyes opened to the fact that I'm pretty small pumpkins anyway on this big, old globe, and I'm thoroughly ashamed of a lot of the things I have—that have ——" his voice, low-pitched anyway because of his weakness, now faltered and stopped.

"That's all right, Doyle," said Dick in as kindly a tone as he could muster. "Now suppose you try and get some rest."

"No—wait, Dick. I've not told you all as yet. First, I want to say that way back in our old school days there were two of the fellows—you know them, Merlin and Dodge—well, they bootlicked me all the time and I used to toady to them a lot just to—just to hear them praise me up. I was a vain kid and I liked their flattery, to be perfectly frank about the matter. Do you remember when the election came off for the captain of the football team and you won out?"

"Yes," came the reply, coldly.

"That same night after the election those two fellows gave me a lot more of their soft soaping. It was like balm to my wounded pride. They poi-

soned my mind still more against you. You see, I used to have a lot of spending money at school and I used to loan them considerable amounts because of their blarney. Oh, I was a chump right enough. Well, soon after this both of them, as you may remember, were dismissed from the school and I saw but little of them for they left the home town, and not until the war began did I ever see or hear from either of them. When I came over here with my regiment I ran across Jack Merlin. He was a sergeant in one of the companies in my outfit and was continually getting into hot water. On two or three occasions I was successful in getting him out of his difficulties, then finally he got sent back home before he had seen any real fighting and secured some kind of a government detail—recruiting or something like that. He used to write to me frequently, and soon after I joined your company and had written him to that effect, he sent me a letter saying he was once again in trouble and if I'd send him a certain sum of money he would tell me something about you which would give me the whip hand. Do you see?"

Dick was now all attention; though he feared he might be doing wrong to allow Doyle to keep on talking, he also saw that to attempt to stop him now would probably be more harmful than to let

him continue, so he nodded his head understandingly.

"I sent him the money. I was sore because you were a captain and I just a lieutenant and under your command. In return he sent me, not one but several letters all of which concerned you and your family. For the most part they were filled with a lot of rank gossip, which, even though I was envious and jealous, I was certain was untrue, but in one of the letters he again stated positively that you had played a low trick on me at school."

Dick still said nothing and continued his far-away stare into the dim corners of the room, while once again a picture flitted across his memory of a man climbing the high wall of a certain home enclosure in Belgium, and, as the climber disappeared over the crest of the wall, there fluttered to the ground a sheaf of white papers—the very letters to which Doyle was now referring.

The sick man stopped for a minute or two and then began again.

"By the time the first of these letters arrived I was already experiencing the subtle change which was coming over me and I tried to forget their contents; but you can't make a black sheep all white in a minute, you know, and at times, even though I did not believe all Merlin had written and said, my nasty nature would get the better of me and in that

THE OLD INN WAS A SCENE OF WILDNESS LONG TO BE REMEMBERED

mood I was liable to say and do things I afterward was ashamed of and regretted. Perhaps it was the nervous tension and strain we were under, and perhaps too it was the knowledge, or the feeling at least, that both you and Tommy Turner hated the sight of me and resented my presence in the company. I felt I was a rank outsider and though I had more or less created that position by my own action I tried to shift the burden for it all on you."

Again Reddy waited for a while. Perhaps the medicine he had taken was making him drowsy, for his speech was gradually getting slower and slower.

" That's about all, I guess, except I made this trip down here for the express purpose of seeing you, Dick Comstock, and asking you if you'd forgive all that's gone before and let me shake hands with you, Dick, as man to man, and friend to friend. For I've come to realize and to know that you have been a fair and square fighter from start to finish, Dick, and that I've been the ' dog in the manger.' Will you? "

Knowing Reddy Doyle as he had all these years, Dick also knew the effort and the self-humiliation which all these explanations had caused him, and as Reddy finished speaking and half-way held out his hand over the white coverlid, he found it grasped

for the first time that he could remember in real friendship and understanding by this lifelong acquaintance and former rival.

CHAPTER XX

TOMMY TURNER DISCOVERS SOMETHING

A MONTH had come and gone. In the quiet old German town nestling on the banks of the Rhine affairs had again settled back into nearly their normal routine. The day of the Faures' and Ursula's leaving had been postponed from time to time. With Mike Dorlan's life hanging in the balance none of the party desired to leave, for the old sergeant was a prime favorite of them all. Now that he had been pronounced out of danger and with Reddy Doyle already on his feet, Mr. Faure had stated that they could not well afford to delay longer.

Once again the hour for their departure had been set and this time Reddy was to accompany the travellers part of their way to Brest and possibly might be fortunate enough to catch the same transport with them across the Atlantic.

Nothing more had been heard of either the son of Frau Hoffman nor of the man Haskell. Papers declaring the latter to be a deserter had long since been made out and published broadcast, a money reward being offered for his apprehension and delivery to the military authorities.

In the interim it had also been discovered by the men concerned that certain pieces of their clothing had disappeared on the night of the shooting at the *gastwirtschaft,* and by putting this and that together it was surmised that Haskell had aided Hoffman by stealing the necessary wearing apparel and the Colt's pistol, and that the two had made their escape together.

All arrangements had been made for an early start and on the morrow, too, Mike Dorlan was to be removed in one of the big hospital ambulances, back to a base hospital. Dick, together with Tommy Turner, had dropped in to have a final chat with Doyle and found him in the midst of packing.

The evening had been pleasantly spent in company with the girls and the elder people, by witnessing a minstrel show gotten up by members of the company in honor of their guests, for as such were all the inmates of the *gastwirtschaft* now considered by the entire garrison. Following this the officers of the post had held a happy " at home " in their mess hall and the women had left to stow away the last of their belongings so that there should be no delay in the morning.

Reddy still occupied the room formerly used by Friedrich Hoffman, and during his enforced stay had filled the place up with curious antiques and souvenirs of the war. The former to be taken home

to his mother who was an ardent student and admirer of ancient objects of art in every form, and Reddy had spent much time and money in acquiring many of the things from the old inhabitants of the surrounding country.

Man-like he had put off until the last minute the packing of most of these things and when Dick and Tommy pushed in unceremoniously he was busily engaged in his task but making poor progress.

"Don't you want me to lend you a hand at this?" inquired Tommy, whose attitude toward Doyle had changed so greatly that now he was an ardent booster and pretty constant companion for his former foe. "You'll never be packed at the rate you are going. Suppose I collect all your duds and lay 'em out on the bunk, then you can see what fits what, and in that way make better progress."

"Fine idea, Tommy. Go ahead and shoot. It's a relief to receive some suggestions with this mess," replied Reddy, who had been charging back and forth from trunks and packing boxes to one thing and another to find in most cases the article he had brought was the one he did not want or could not use.

So Tommy pitched in and soon the walls and tables were well cleared and the youngster on the hunt for more was delving into a closet which opened into the room.

Reddy, on his knees before one of the suitcases and carrying on a conversation with Dick, looked up as Tommy threw open the door.

"Hold on, Tommy, the things there don't belong to me. That is the property of Frau Hoffman's son."

But Tommy did not hear him, so intent was he on his quest, and already he had removed a pair of binoculars from one of the hooks at the back of the closet.

"I say, Tommy, those are Friedrich Hoffman's things in there," reiterated Reddy.

"Someone's put some of your stuff in here, however," answered Tommy. "Here are your field-glasses, anyhow."

"My field-glasses," exclaimed Reddy, looking puzzled and leaning over so that he might view the contents of a big suitcase resting on a near-by chair. "You're wrong, old top, just stowed my glasses away in here," and he pointed at the bag.

"Guess you've made a mistake then, Reddy," said Tommy, emerging from the closet, "for these are the glasses you used to tote around while you were serving with us—yes—and they've got your name on 'em," he ended, extracting the binoculars from the case he held suspended by its fair-leather strap.

In two strides Doyle had crossed the room and

without ceremony snatched both glasses and receptacle from Tommy's hands, and was examining them intently.

"Well—I'll be—I'll be blowed! Why, I lost those glasses the first night of the fighting before Belleau Wood. No, I didn't lose them—they were stolen from me. Now how in the name of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales did they arrive here? I didn't bring them. I'm sure of that."

Tommy scratched the back of his head ruminatively.

"You can't prove it by me," he answered.

"Do you or did you suspect any particular person?" asked Dick.

"Why—why, yes, I did suspect someone—in fact I was pretty positive at the time, but finding them here puts a different light on the matter, or rather takes away what little light there was. I don't know what to say. It looks peculiar to say the least, and ——"

"Do you mean to imply that any of our men swiped them?" interrupted Tommy, always on the defensive where Reddy was concerned, or the honor of the marines impugned, in spite of the fact that for the past four weeks an era of peace and good fellowship had reigned supreme.

"Hold on, Tommy," said Dick, quietly. "Reddy has made no such inference that I can see."

"Yes, Tommy, dry up and don't be so quick on the trigger," added Doyle, but not in the least as he would have spoken six months before. "I see what you are driving at, but you are wrong." Then turning to Dick he continued:

"Do you remember that straggler I used as a runner the first night we really got into the scrapping, Dick? The man who called himself Doyle?"

"Yes," answered Dick.

"I believed at the time that he was the man who had taken them and later I remembered that I had removed the glasses together with some other of my accoutrements and laid them aside. Right after doing so something came up and I left the spot for a while. I never missed them till next day, then I found that I'd lost a map and some other things at the same time, and although I could not say positively that Doyle did take them, I always suspicioned that he did. If he did take them, some German must have gotten them from him later on —may have taken him prisoner or killed him, maybe ——"

"No, Reddy, the man Doyle wasn't killed, but he was badly wounded, and a German didn't take the glasses from him—he was a German—a spy himself."

"You don't mean it? Why, how do you know this, Dick? To tell the truth I was somewhat doubtful

about that scoundrel, and if you remember I asked you the day we made our first attack—while we were getting our new place in line, if you didn't think the Germans opposite our particular sector had a pretty accurate idea of what we intended doing? Had it not been for these two things I might have believed Doyle was all right and had been killed in the fighting."

"I remember," was Dick's reply, while Tommy listened open-mouthed to the conversation, for so far Dick had kept his own counsel regarding the facts he had learned about the runner Doyle, "and now I'll tell you all that I have found out since then. Your runner was enlisted in the corps right enough, and was attached to the Q. M. D. when we were sent in to relieve the French. This was his first opportunity to get back to his own people and he was probably trying to join them when you ran across him and pressed him into service. As soon as he could, though, he made his getaway, but not before he had first given warning to that bunch of Boches who had started building their machine-gun nest out in the wheat field directly in front of your advanced post, and in the hope of learning more of our plans he again returned and, as we suspect, succeeded in his nefarious work.

"The day we first penetrated into the *Bois de Belleau* he was engaged in sniping at us from the

branches of a tree, and when Tommy here was wounded and about all in I chanced to shoot him down at the same time he sent a bullet into Tommy."

Both Doyle and Tommy were listening intently to Dick's recital.

"To go on," said Dick. "As you know, he was dressed up in our uniform—that is, it was a mixture of army and marine—so he must have been picked up by our men, and being badly wounded was sent on back to a dressing station and then to the base hospitals till finally he ended up in the same hospital in Paris with you, Tommy."

"And you mean to tell me that the fellow who shot me was sleeping under the same roof with me for days? And to think I never knew it," exclaimed the youngster disgustedly. "Why, if I had known that I'd have gotten up out of bed, sick or no sick, and beaten him up to a frazzle."

"Yes," continued Dick, "he was there sure enough, and the day the Marines paraded in Paris —the Fourth of July, you remember?" At this point Reddy looked away from Dick rather shamefacedly. "That very day he escaped from the hospital and luckily, too, for the surgeon in charge had about made up his mind that he was a suspicious character and was going to turn him over to the M. P. that night."

"But what has all this to do with Reddy's glasses turning up here?" inquired Tommy.

"You are unusually thick, son," said Dick, dryly. "I should have thought that you would have guessed ——"

"I have, I have!" shouted Tommy. "Friedrich Hoffman and the runner Doyle are one and the same person. By jinks, now I get it, and savey the whole works: I'm hep."

"You are right, Tommy," replied Dick, and then he carefully explained to Reddy how Hoffman had returned to the little village; how he had told contradictory stories; his denial of knowledge of the English language; and how Ursula and Marie had instantly recognized him as the escaped soldier from the hospital ward.

"He was always a surly brute," concluded Dick, "and from the first I had no faith in him. When the girls told me their suspicions it then flashed across my mind where I had seen him, and to be perfectly frank, Reddy, I couldn't help but think your connection with him was peculiar, and feeling as I did toward you, I couldn't help wonder why you were protecting him, for I was almost convinced against my will that you must have known him to be a spy, especially when Haskell, on the night the *gastwirtschaft* was the scene of so much excitement, told me that Hoffman had told him

that he used to know you when you made trips to Germany before the war started. You see how our foolish minds and twisted beliefs put us on the wrong tack oftentimes."

"I can understand, Dick," said Doyle, and then he added manfully: "But in your case it was different. You didn't wish to believe ill of me, while I was always only too eager to believe the worst about you."

"Cut that, Reddy," said Dick. "That's all gone by now."

"When you two mushers get through lathering on the soft soap, let's get on with the rest of this enigma," said Tommy with a comical grimace. "What I want to know is, providing Hoffman was taken up by our people and put into one of our hospitals, how it was he still happens to have these glasses in his possession now—I mean in his room here?"

"That is something we can only guess at," answered Dick.

"Under the circumstances I believe we have the right to investigate the rest of his belongings, don't you?"

"I should say that we can do that, Tommy. I don't believe we will be committing any breach of faith by doing so. The reason Hoffman isn't

around is pretty well established. He was the real instigator of the fight here four weeks ago."

"I'll tell you another reason, now that you have told me all this," ventured Tommy. "I remember distinctly a man who called himself Doyle who worked in the Q. M. D. I do not remember exactly how he looked, but I had occasion to report him to his C. O. for impudence while we were doing our last bit of training. At the time I made the report I discovered that the man had enlisted but a short time before and because of his penmanship and familiarity with accounts in a small way, but most of all because of his knowledge of German, he had been transferred to the Q. M. D. and sent over right away. You see how the shoe fits."

"I remember he told me he had had several 'run ins' with you," said Reddy.

"He's our man then. So you see I dope it out like this. He recognized Reddy during the fight in the room down-stairs and as he had already committed himself when he made that 'break' in Corporal Breen's presence, he knew he would be on the *tapis* and Reddy would see him and in turn recognize him and get him arrested as a deserter."

"I believe that under the circumstances there can be no doubt as to our rights in the matter then," announced Dick.

The search proved beyond any doubt that Fried-

rich Hoffman was, as Dick, Reddy and Tommy had already guessed—a deserter from the United States forces and subject therefore to severe punishment should he be apprehended, and one of the most interesting things found in the belongings of the man was a card showing that he had been employed as an assistant bookkeeper in the famous athletic club in New York City of which Reddy was such a prominent member.

CHAPTER XXI

HOFFMAN PAYS A VISIT

During the month which had passed from the time Friedrich Hoffman left Private Haskell dying under the dusty, mouldy hay in the deserted barn, the criminal had been having no easy time. After the failure to get at his mother's small hoard of money he was too anxious to put the miles between him and the scenes of his latest crimes to tempt Dame Fortune by staying around in the vicinity of the village. He knew the punishment which awaited him if captured, and he was too fond of his life, such as it was, to risk another attempt to supply himself with more funds.

The twenty dollars which he had stripped from poor Haskell, together with a larger sum which he happened to have in his pockets, would keep him supplied with food for some little while. His uniform would at times be a detriment to him, but in general he believed it would prove a successful adjunct. His intention was to proceed to the coast of France and in some way get back to America and the United States, where he could secure remunerative employment—anyway it would pay him better than anything he could find to do in

Germany; wages would be high, and he would not have to work so hard for what he received as he would in his native land.

Even as he dashed down the alleyway with the whining bullets of the patrol whistling about his ears he had decided upon his course of action. First of all he must cross the river. This task might prove difficult, as there were no boats to be procured. It was too cold to attempt to swim even could he do so, and he could not afford to risk his neck by appearing at any of the bridgeheads, for within a few hours, he rightly guessed, Captain Dick would have sent word to bring him back into custody.

Railroad travel, even when he reached the opposite bank, would likewise prove dangerous, for there were M. P. at all railroad stations in the back areas, therefore if he succeeded in crossing safely he must make his way as best he could along unfrequented highways and byways toward the coast. However, he did not fear active pursuit unless the body of Haskell should be discovered, and this he did not believe would follow for some time, perhaps months. As Haskell also would be reported as absent, any description sent out for their apprehension would be that of two refugees, consequently as he would be travelling alone, his chances of escape were much greater.

Arriving near the bank of the river he proceeded as rapidly as was possible in the darkness to a spot where a few days before he had noticed a lot of lumber recently piled and intended for future building. Here he was most fortunate, for not only did he find the heavy planks suitable to his purposes but also he found a long coil of light rope. Working feverishly he soon had sufficient lumber carried to the water's edge to answer his purpose—the construction of a raft.

Quite some time before dawn, with the aid of the rope, and using Spanish windlasses to bind his planks together, he was ready to launch his rickety craft. The unstable raft served to keep his upper clothing dry, but the cold water dashed over his feet and many times during the passage of the river he narrowly escaped slipping overboard in his endeavors to paddle to the opposite shore.

The current had carried him several miles downstream before he eventually made a landing, then after pushing the flimsy structure as far out into the river as possible, he scurried up the steep, high bank just as the sun rose over the hills behind him.

Avoiding a town which he saw near by he sought shelter in a sunny nook far from any habitation and built a fire whereby he might dry out his shoes and socks before proceeding further. With his bare feet to the flame he waited impatiently, but all

the time he was getting colder and colder in spite of the heat of the fire and the increasing warmth of the sun. Finally he donned his partially dried clothing again and crossing the fields till he came to a highway proceeded on his long journey. By now Friedrich was nearly famished; his body was aching, and he knew he had taken a severe chill. A few rods from the highway he saw a house, with an old German pottering about the door. When accosted the old man was at first suspicious of this man in military uniform, but with chattering teeth the refugee fabricated a story which won the old man's sympathy and a little later the hungry traveller was sitting down to a bowl of hot porridge which lent him new life and vitality.

For over a week Friedrich stayed with the farmer before he felt able to proceed, and then bidding good-bye to his host, he started on. On two or three occasions he was stopped and questioned by the civil authorities. Once some members of the Military Police operating in the vicinity where he happened to then be halted him, but his facile tongue after a while turned away suspicion and resulted in his getting a ride on his way in an official government car. After this he often was given lifts either in machines or by natives going to or from their labors, but always he travelled west.

He had crossed Luxemburg and was passing

through Belgium when he came out on a road which he immediately recognized as one of the routes over which the retreating Germans bound for Coblenz had used, and a few kilometers away was the little town, the citizens of which had given the American conquerors such a valiant reception a few months before.

Soon he was passing through the streets. He did not hesitate as to his direction and before long he stopped opposite one of the houses located in the residential section of the town. A survey of the place did not enlighten him, but with assurance he crossed the road and knocked boldly at the door. Almost immediately it was opened by a very comely looking woman.

"Pardon me, but do Monsieur and Madame Flammeau reside here?" questioned Friedrich.

"*Oui, Monsieur, Je suis* Madame Flammeau. Do you wish to speak with me?"

"Yes and no, Madame Flammeau. I am really here to speak to your daughter, Mademoiselle Suzette. I have a message for her."

"Sh-h-h-sh! Not so loud, Monsieur. I know from whom the message comes. It is from Monsieur Doyle of the American Army, is it not? Yes, your face tells me I am right," she continued, for in his surprise at the woman's unexpected remark, Hoffman had made an involuntary start, and then

recovering himself had nodded his head in silent acquiescence. Whereupon the woman added to his mystification still more, for she stepped outside the house and closing the door behind her she leaned forward till her lips were close to his ear and said: "Do not remain here now. Return at eight o'clock. My husband is taking his afternoon's rest at present and he may awake at any moment. To-night he will leave the house for a few hours. It will be safe at that time to see Suzette and deliver your message. I am sure it is good news that you bring. She will be so pleased. She is all ready to depart at a moment's notice. Now, go."

With that she quickly reëntered the house and again the door was closed, while Friedrich Hoffman, still bewildered at this unexpected turn of events, hastened away in obedience to Madame's directions.

During the time he had to wait he proceeded to the one hotel of which the town boasted, and there improved his personal appearance as best he could. He had his rather unkempt growth of beard trimmed closely, and for a few sous his clothing renovated. By eight o'clock he was once again on his way to the home of Suzette.

During the intervening hours his mind had tackled the problem which so suddenly had been thrust upon him. On arriving in town he had gone

to M. Flammeau's home for the purpose of making himself known to Suzette and somehow or other securing from her additional funds to carry him to the coast without more delay.

It will be remembered that when Reddy Doyle discovered the loss of his field-glasses, a packet of letters and papers were also missing. It was some of these letters which had given the purloiner of other person's goods some very intimate information. It was from them that Hoffman learned of Reddy's infatuation for the pretty little Belgian maiden and also that the father of the girl objected to Reddy's attentions and intentions, and had forbidden the two to carry on further correspondence.

Once again luck now favored Hoffman, and piecing things together he arrived at the conclusion that Madame Flammeau's remarks could mean but one thing;—Suzette with her mother's sanction had made arrangements to elope with Reddy and was waiting for a message from him that he was prepared to carry out their plans.

Here indeed was a lucky stroke, for undoubtedly Suzette would have money, part of her dowry at least, which the mother would supply, even though it might not be much, and now if he, Hoffman, was clever he would have everything his own way: get the girl, her money, and add another score to his credit against the race he hated above all

others—the Yankees. He hoped his four weeks' growth of beard would prove so deceiving that Suzette would fail to recognize him. Looking down at his uniform, he decided that even though he could not afford to take too many chances, neither could he afford to supply himself with other clothes. If the girl found him out he would trust to his wit to get out of difficulties, and in many ways his uniform in this instance was an asset.

The house was in darkness when he again approached it at the appointed hour, but without hesitation he knocked gently and was admitted by Madame Flammeau, who whispered for him to enter the room which he remembered so well.

"Suzette will be down in a few minutes," she announced, after turning on the lights of the living-room, and offering Hoffman a chair. "Tell me, are the arrangements made and will he be here to-morrow as he promised? Do not say that you have come to tell her of another postponement. The poor child could not stand that. Nearly three weeks ago, —no, nearly four, we were all prepared, and then came the news that he was very ill—injured, and could not get here, but was recovering slowly. Do not say you have a message of such a nature."

"On the contrary everything is as it should be, except the plans have necessarily been altered a little. Monsieur thought it safer to send me, and

bring Mademoiselle to him. I arrived by train this afternoon. He is coming by automobile to-night and will pick us up on the Paris highway. Everything will go forward this time and without fail."

"Coming to-night! By auto! Why, Monsieur, you must be mistaken. He assured her he would be here by train on the morrow. And why should he meet her on the highway to Paris? He said he would come directly to the house, but that everything should be ready for her to leave at once;—that he must not delay. What made him change? I do not understand."

"That is the reason for my coming in advance—because of this vital change in his plans," responded Friedrich glibly, and he was greatly relieved to have Suzette enter at this moment. Undoubtedly the two would discuss this matter in his presence and from their talk he would gain enough insight as to what part he must play in this game to avoid any more of the "rocks and shoals" such as those he had narrowly escaped being wrecked upon a few seconds ago.

"Oh, Suzette," cried her mother, folding the girl in her arms, "this gentleman has come from Monsieur Doyle, with a message that the plans have again been altered." Suzette started and gazed, frightened, at Hoffman. "He states that Monsieur will arrive here to-night by auto; that he is to

pick you up on the highway to Paris; that he has not even time to stop, as was arranged. You must get ready at once, my dear, and leave the house within an hour—before your father returns—else you might not be able to get away. Come, we will go and get you ready."

Hoffman saw here a chance to escape safely, and rising he said:

"I believe it is better, too, that I leave at once, Madame. Perhaps Monsieur might return unexpectedly and find me here, then complications would certainly arise. So, if Mademoiselle will make a rendezvous, for nine-thirty or any hour you think best, I will meet her, and deliver her safely to my Captain."

"Yes, it is better that you should go. I wish to have these last few moments alone with my child, as you will readily understand, Monsieur. So you are in the Captain's company?"

"Yes, Madame," was the laconic reply, and picking up his cap he moved toward the hallway.

During this time Suzette had said nothing, but all the time her eyes were fastened on this man who had come in the guise of a messenger, and who, for possibly a few hours, was to be her escort until such time as the machine bringing Monsieur Doyle should put in its appearance.

Madame Flammeau followed Hoffman into the

hall, appointed the place where he was to meet Suzette, then after peering up and down the street, quietly motioned for him to go, and it was with a great sigh of relief that the German heard her shutting the portal as soon as he had crossed its threshold.

"What is the soldier's name, Mother?" inquired Suzette, when the two were ascending the stairs immediately after Friedrich's departure.

"I never thought to ask. He did not tell me."

"Somehow I do not trust him. His eyes are shifty, but it must be all right, otherwise how could he know what he knows. And being in the same company with my Captain, it is not likely he would be chosen unless he was perfectly trustworthy. Oh, dear, I wish ——"

"I know, Suzette. It is not all as we would have it, but now it cannot be helped."

"Mother, I do not see how I can leave you," and the girl laid her head on the mother's shoulder sobbing brokenly.

"There, there, little one," soothed the mother. "The parting had to come soon. I regret you could not have gone openly, but your father's unaccountable attitude would not permit of it. And if he believed, after you have gone, that I had aught to do with your going, my own future would be miserable. Some day I know he will relent, and

all will yet be well. But come, this is no time for tears. We must be brave. We must each remember the other as with a smiling face," and embracing her child for a single moment more in silence, she let her arms fall away and set about her preparations for the girl's coming journey.

After leaving the house, Hoffman went at once to a garage and made arrangements for a touring car to meet him at a remote place just on the outskirts of the town, and it was arranged that the driver for a certain stipulated sum of money should take them to a railroad station about thirty kilometers distant. At the appointed hour Hoffman was waiting in feverish impatience at the rendezvous. He had not long to cool his heels, for soon he made out the girl's figure struggling along the highway under the weight of a heavy travelling-bag. Hastening forward he relieved her of the bag, then keeping to the darker streets they wended their way to the place where his machine was to pick them up. During the walk he could hear the girl sobbing softly at his side, and all his efforts toward conversation were ignored by her as though he had not spoken.

"We are to wait for Monsieur here at the cross-roads, Mademoiselle," he remarked, after they had been walking for about ten minutes in silence. Then placing the bag in the dark shadows of a

near-by hedge, he continued: "This bag will afford you a fair seat upon which to rest until the Captain arrives. Who can tell, he may be a few moments late, but I doubt it, for I know that if I was in his boots I would be ahead of time with such a precious packet awaiting me at the roadside."

If he hoped to elicit a reply he was doomed to disappointment. The girl took advantage of his suggestion as regards the seat, and kept her eyes fastened on the great highway. With the approach of every car, for a moment showering them with the effulgence of their bright headlights, she would rise and stand watching intently until, with a whirr and roar, the vehicle went flying by.

Finally came a car bearing down on them, and going slower than most of the others. The driver was keeping well to the left side of the road and moved a spot-light on the machine along the paths to either side. Eventually it rested on the man and woman waiting under the hedge, then with a grinding of the brakes it came to a standstill.

The girl had again risen to her feet, her hands clasped across her beating heart, her eyes staring eagerly into the machine, but the side curtains were down and she could not possibly discern if anyone were sitting there beside the driver or not.

With the stopping of the car, Hoffman ad-

vanced, threw open the rear door and placed the bag on the floor.

"Good-evening, Captain," the girl heard him say. "Yes, we are here." Then turning to Suzette, "Quick, Mademoiselle. There is now no time to lose."

Never doubting for an instant but that Captain Reddy Doyle was sitting there awaiting her in the darkness, and in her excitement and agitation forgetting it strange that the man for whom she had waited so long and sacrificed so much should not have jumped from the machine to meet her, she stepped forward, and almost before she knew it was done she found herself seated in the tonneau, the door shut, and the car rushing forward on its way. Impulsively she turned to the man sitting beside her, her arms half outstretched, her eyes alight with anticipation, but in time she noted by the reflected glare of the headlights that it was her soldier escort who was seated by her side, and at the same time she remembered him as the man who had come once before purporting to be Reddy's messenger—the man who called himself Doyle.

With a smothered cry of fear the astonished girl reached for the handle of the door intending to throw herself from the car, but with a quick lunge Hoffman caught her and threw her none too gently back on the seat.

"Sit still, Mademoiselle," he said quietly, so that the chauffeur should not overhear. "I did not have time to explain everything to you. Do not fear. I am really taking you to the Captain, but not as I told your mother. If I had told her the truth both the Captain and I feared she would not consent to your going. This car is to take us to the railroad station thirty kilometers from your home, where we will entrain for Paris. Monsieur could not meet you anywhere else because of orders from his general. He was heart-broken, Mademoiselle, but it was unavoidable. He will be at the station to meet us as soon as I telegraph him on what train we are travelling."

Poor Suzette, frightened and unnerved, cowered back in her corner wide-eyed and unbelieving. She somehow had sensed that this man was not to be trusted, and she felt now that her only hope was to acquiesce to his wishes, but at the first opportunity make an attempt to evade him and return to her home.

That trip in the machine was a nightmare to the girl. Everything that could happen on a short run of thirty kilometers seemed to happen. Engine trouble, a punctured tire, a broken connection, and not until daylight did they limp into their destination, the chauffeur swearing and Hoffman worn out, trying to explain to his companion that every-

thing was as it should be. They had ample time to get some breakfast before the departure of the next train westward, but even so at the last minute they had barely time to get aboard, and then to the man's chagrin he found they had to share their compartment with a tall severe looking English-woman and two children. Not for a single moment during the long ride in the slow accommodation train did the man leave the girl to her own devices. Although she could not speak English, nor could their travelling companions converse in French, he decided to take no chances. After a most trying night in the second-class carriage, Suzette was glad to get out at a station about four hours' ride from the great city and drink in the freshness of the beautiful morning from the station platform.

By studious courtesy Hoffman had partially regained favor with the girl and her faith in his story was fast returning, therefore when she suddenly discovered that the train upon which they had been travelling was pulling out of the station without them she turned to him once more a countenance filled with alarm.

"I am sorry, Mademoiselle," said the man looking down shamefacedly, "but I had funds sufficient to bring us this far and no more. I will go and telegraph the Captain at once and wire him to send me money for the completion of the journey."

"Oh, Monsieur, why did you not let me know?" and impulsively she reached in the small purse she carried and extracted a roll of money. "Here, take this and let us go on at once. No, do not hesitate, Monsieur, for I would not have Captain Doyle know that this has happened for anything. You must accept," and she forced some of the money into the seemingly unwilling hands of her escort. Together they went to the office and bought two tickets, second-class, on the next through express, and then Hoffman left the girl alone while he went presumably to telegraph their whereabouts to his waiting superior officer.

For some reason this bit of acting on the part of Friedrich convinced Suzette that he was telling the truth after all, and when they met for breakfast she was quite gay and happy. They took more time than they intended and again at the last moment they rushed through the gates and even as the guard was in the act of closing the doors they were bustled aboard just as the train was rolling out of the station. Four hours later their train pulled in under the great shed of the magnificent Gard du Nord, and Suzette followed Hoffman to the street expecting every moment to be greeted by the man she had come so far to meet.

CHAPTER XXII

WHAT HAS BECOME OF SUZETTE?

The motor of the great touring car drawn up outside the *gastwirtschaft* was throbbing in the light of the early morning sun. The passengers already had taken their places, Mrs. Faure and the two girls occupying the rear seat; Mr. Faure beside the driver and Reddy Doyle squeezed in one of the small seats in the tonneau where also a goodly share of the luggage was stored. However, Reddy had gladly accepted when the invitation had been extended him to accompany Ursula and her friends on their journey to Brest.

A half hour previously a large comfortable ambulance had whisked away First Sergeant Mike Dorlan, now well out of danger, and the natives of the town had been amazed at these Yankee soldiers and the noise they made when they cheered their old and much respected comrade-in-arms with a "three times three and a tiger," as his shining conveyance rolled so swiftly and silently by them.

Grouped beside the Faures' car were the officers of Dick's command come to bid the travellers Godspeed, while further down the street near the com-

pany billets the men were waiting around ready to cheer the departing visitors as they passed through the village on their way to Coblenz, the first leg of their long journey.

Captain Dick, standing on the running-board, was holding his sister's hand and talking rapidly in the meantime, while Tommy Turner's tongue was wagging at a great rate from the opposite side. Marie, occupying the middle of the seat, was the most silent one of the party. Her eyes were downcast and the sensitive, red underlip was scarcely able to keep from trembling. She failed to see the looks which Captain Dick kept sending in her direction as his tongue continued to convey an unending number of messages to his father, mother, and all the relatives near and far.

"Everything ready back there?" questioned Mr. Faure. "What? Yes? Then it is time to be off, my children. We have far to go."

"Have you asked her yet?" whispered Ursula in Dick's ear.

"No, not yet. It wouldn't be fair till this thing is all over," he muttered back, gloomily enough.

"You foolish boy, can't you see that ——"

"Off the running-board there, you youngsters," interrupted the voice of Mr. Faure, "or we never will start and I want to be well on our way toward Belgium by nightfall."

"Then you have decided to make the whole trip by motor?" asked Mrs. Faure.

"Yes. From what the chauffeur tells me, it can be done in splendid time and besides it will be very interesting to go back over the identical territory, towns, cities and the like, which our men had to traverse to get here. Don't you all agree?"

Before anyone had an opportunity to answer Tommy spoke.

"If you are going back over exactly the same route by which we came, and if you happen to stop at a certain little Belgian village where Dick and I put up I hope you get as wonderful a reception as we received. Do you remember, Dick?" and Tommy beamed across the car. "Of course you know which town I mean—the place where you chased that fellow over the wall in rear of Monsieur Flammeau's house."

Dick was about to reply when the astonished voice of Captain Doyle stopped him.

"Did you say Flammeau—F-l-a-m-m-e-a-u? And do you know Monsieur and Madame?"

"I should say, yes," exclaimed Tommy, "and their daughter, Suzette, too. Dick, here, can tell you all about her. He is quite the hero in her eyes. He probably saved the girl's life and she is his devoted admirer."

"Oh, say, Tommy," came protestingly from

Dick, but the harm had been done, and if Tommy had meant to be " funny " no one present appeared to see the point to his wit.

Reddy Doyle looked stunned as well as amazed. Marie Faure bit her lip now in real earnest to keep from crying. " Perhaps it is because of this girl that Dick has been so ' brotherly ' to me," she thought bitterly. Ursula also looked perplexed and astonished. Here was certainly something Dick had kept from her, and up to this time she was quite sure there were no secrets which both did not share. She opened her lips to speak but happening to glance at Marie, changed her mind and said nothing. As for Dick—if looks could have killed, Tommy Turner would have died then and there on the spot. Mrs. Faure, also seeing and rightly interpreting her daughter's look, pressed the girl's hand under cover of the heavy rug thrown over her knees. She, too, had wondered at Dick's seeming reticence—but Mr. Faure, all unconscious of the bombshell which Tommy had so unwittingly exploded in their midst, again called out:

" Come, come, we are off! Au revoir, messieurs! Au revoir, Tommy! Au revoir, Dick, my boy," and giving the driver the signal to start, the car moved forward slowly.

Unable to say anything for the moment, Dick leaned forward and kissed Ursula, made an un-

successful dive for Marie's hand, and then just before leaping to the ground he bent far over to whisper in the girl's ear, "Don't mind Tommy. He's a fool. There's only you, Marie."

As the deep blue eyes met his own he saw them once more aglow with happiness and sunshine, and gladly he glimpsed the dimples again appear while the red lips parted over the perfect teeth in a joyous smile of thorough trust and confidence in him, then he jumped to the road.

On through the village street raced the big car; again came the cheers of the men on the morning air, and Dick, glowering at Tommy when the car finally disappeared around a bend of the road, said in no gentle tones:

"And as for you—I'd enjoy wringing your neck."

"Like to wring my neck! What in the world have I done now?" asked the youngster innocently.

"You know blamed well, you idiot. What? You mean to tell me that you have forgotten that remark about Suzette Flammeau? Don't you know it was Reddy Doyle whom I chased 'over the garden wall' that night? That he was the man she was in love with and her father opposed the idea? All the time Reddy has been here that is the only thing which has not been explained, and

as a matter of fact, I've tried to forget about it. It is the only thing about Doyle that 'sticks in my craw' as the saying is, and even that may have a plausible explanation. We only heard Suzette's side of the case, you know."

"I know?" said Tommy, amazement in his tone and voice. "Reddy Doyle, you say? Why, Dick, this old war has gone to your head. You never told me anything about its being Reddy Doyle. If you remember after you read some papers you found, you closed up like a clam about the whole affair. How then should I know I was treading on anyone's toes?"

And then it was Dick remembered that it was as Tommy had said; he never before had told him of his suspicions and surmises, nor of the conversation he had held with Suzette.

"Well, I'm dumguzzled," said Tommy, after a moment or two of silence. "I can't believe it's true, Dick. I don't believe Reddy would handle any woman as rough as the fellow behind that closed door was handling that girl, but suppose you tell me all about it now so that I won't be making any more breaks." Thereupon Dick related the entire story of the night's adventure, also what Suzette had told him the next morning and what he had overheard the men saying regarding Reddy's company marching on the parallel road

and about his men having been in the town during the previous night.

"So you see," he concluded, "I had a good right to suspect Reddy, and now after that look on his face when you mentioned the Flammeaus' home and Suzette, I am more convinced than ever, but I'll say this much for Reddy, that I do believe there is something more to the story, and I am trying hard to reserve my final judgment of the case until I can hear his side of it as well as hers, but how to get at it is a rather ticklish proposition. If I asked him, he might tell me it was none of my business, and I rather believe he would be right at that."

However, all these problems were forgotten a few minutes later, for as they turned to enter their quarters a very much excited German came hurriedly up the street and requested permission to speak to the Herr Captain-Commandant, and on Dick's statement that he would hear what he had to say, the man's story proved absorbing enough indeed.

After giving his name, occupation and place of residence the native went on to say:

"This morning I had occasion to enter an old barn I seldom use. On throwing open the door I immediately saw that the place had been entered since I had last visited it. In a moment more I discovered the body of one of your men. He has

evidently been dead for some time, and so I came directly to you to report the matter. The body was covered over with hay, but beyond removing some of it to discover what was underneath, I have left everything as I found it."

"What makes you believe it is the body of one of my men?" inquired Dick.

"I do not state it to be so, positively. I merely guessed at that, but I do know it is an American soldier or marine because of the uniform."

"Wait until I send for the surgeon, and then you may take us to the place," said Dick, and calling for the orderly he despatched him post-haste for Doctor Cathcart. In the meantime, he had nearly made up his mind that the body in the lonely old barn could be one of two persons, it might prove to be either that of Friedrich Hoffman or Private Haskell.

When Doctor Cathcart arrived, the party under the guidance of the burgher proceeded to the outskirts of the town and there under the hay, exactly as Friedrich Hoffman had left them, were the remains of Haskell and also the bundle of clothing which Hoffman had discarded and which was soon proved as having belonged to him.

In accordance with the regulations, Dick had a board of officers appointed to investigate the circumstances attending the death of Haskell, and it

was found that beyond a doubt the marine had been killed by a blow on the head from some blunt instrument which had crushed in his skull, but whom the person was who had committed the act the board could not determine. The dead man's pockets had been rifled, his identification tags were gone, and from the marks still remaining on the dirt floor of the barn it was evident that a struggle had taken place. Everything pointed to Friedrich Hoffman as the guilty party, but no amount of imagination nor conjecture could settle on any plausible motive for the deed.

The afternoon of that same day the body of Haskell was given a military burial, and the notation of his desertion was erased from the records of the company, while every honor was accorded him, so, even though the man's lack of principle had probably governed most of his life, nevertheless it was his loyalty to the colors at a crucial moment which brought on his death, and it is pleasant to remember that at the last his country and his countrymen paid these final tributes to his memory.

While these incidents were transpiring in the little village, Mr. Faure and his party were making splendid time toward their destination. A short stop at Coblenz was allowed and during the time the rest of the occupants of the car were resting

and procuring something to satisfy their healthy appetites, Mr. Faure was closeted with the Commanding General of the Coblenz area, and when he rejoined the party his face wore a much satisfied expression. Unheard by either of the girls or Reddy he took the first opportunity that presented itself to talk with his wife.

"It is all arranged satisfactorily, my dear. Dick's orders have been issued and unless someone lets the cat out of the bag, he will never be able to accuse me of having a finger in the pie."

"How soon will he be on his way?" questioned Mrs. Faure.

"He should catch the same transport that we are to take. The General told me the orders will reach Dick in the morning and as they read 'proceed immediately'—which means in military parlance, within twelve hours—barring accidents, I should say he will reach Brest before we do, as we have to stop over in Paris for a day or two. The General assured me that there is no doubt but that the Germans will agree to all the demands and proposals of the allies, so Dick is not going to lose anything by being ordered home this early in the game, and I imagine already he is finding it pretty lonesome back there, eh?" and he smiled knowingly.

"Am I at liberty to tell Marie?" inquired Mrs. Faure.

"My goodness, madam, do you wish to spoil everything? By all means keep it from her—from everyone. She will know of it soon enough and the suspense won't hurt her."

"Did you hear what that young chatterbox, Tommy, said just as we were leaving?"

"I heard him talking at a great rate, but that is nothing unusual for that young man. His tongue must always wag or he is not happy. But to what in particular do you refer?"

"Why, his remark about some girl in Belgium being in love with Dick because he had saved her life and ——"

"I don't blame her. No, I did not hear it, but if you have not learned by now that Tommy's tongue is hinged in the middle, it is time you awoke to the fact."

"But, my dear, it hurt Marie terribly—it ——"

"If that is the case she has gotten over it bravely. Look at her talking over there. Why, the child hasn't a care in the world."

Which was true enough, for Marie, Ursula and Reddy, standing at the entrance to the hotel waiting for the car to arrive, were laughing and talking light-heartedly.

"I know all this section of the country very well indeed," Reddy was saying. "You see, before the war broke out the firm for which I work used to

send me over here once or twice a year, and there is hardly a city or town between the Rhine and the English Channel which I have not had occasion to visit."

"That reminds me of Tommy's remark about some Belgians whom you all appear to know—Flambeau or some such name," said Marie, carelessly—so carelessly in fact that Ursula looked at her in surprise, for she had not heard Dick's last words in Marie's eager ear.

"It's spelled F-l-a-m-m-e-a-u," said Reddy, while again his face became sombre. "Yes, Monsieur is well known to me. I have visited at his home often when in the village where he lives. We will pass through there on our way and if your father and mother do not object I would very much like to stop and inquire about them. Monsieur Flammeau is a very prominent business man there, or at least he was before the Germans occupied Belgium, and it would not hurt my firm any if I stopped to renew old relations with him, you know."

"Are you quite sure the old relations are with Monsieur or with Mademoiselle, Reddy?" asked Marie, mischievously, whereupon Ursula joined in the laugh created by the scarlet, telltale color which Doyle could not suppress and which suffused his face to the roots of his hair.

The arrival of the car saved Reddy from answer-

ing any questions, and soon the streets of Coblenz were a memory, the bridge over the river had been passed, and they were steadily and swiftly covering the miles which intervened between the advanced posts of allied occupation and the bases where many months before these war-tried troops had disembarked to take an active part in the rooting up of a dangerous enemy to the whole world—Kaiser Wilhelm—the then idol of the German nation.

Toward mid-afternoon of the following day, Monsieur Flammeau was about to enter his front door when a large touring car stopped before his house. In the act of placing his hand on the knob of the door he turned to view the occupants of the machine.

With the stopping of the car, Reddy Doyle hurriedly climbed out on the far side and ran around the rear of the machine. His overseas cap was crushed in his left hand, his right was outstretched eagerly, and his flaming hair shone in the sunlight seemingly with added lustre.

No sooner did the man at the door spy him than the look of curiosity on his face changed to one of anger and righteous indignation, and as fast as his short legs would permit he advanced upon the young officer with his cane raised as if in attack or defense, it was difficult to determine which.

At his hostile approach Reddy halted beside the

car, but when Monsieur Flammeau still continued to advance, he began to speak deferentially:

"Bon jour, Monsieur Flammeau. I am glad to see you looking so well after all these years, and may I also inquire after the health of Madame and Mademoiselle?"

The fussy little man did not stop until he was almost within arm's length, and then, with his cane still raised threateningly, he came to a standstill, and, drawing himself to as full a height as his rotund figure would permit, he glared into the younger man's eyes and began speaking vehemently.

"You—you come here and inquire after my health and that of my wife? After all that has happened, you come to add insult to injury by asking for my daughter? Do you wish to ridicule me—you, whom I forbade to ever address me? Did I not tell you before the war began that you could not marry her? And still your letters arrive, which I destroy. Then after all these terrible years of hardship and privation, of torture and humiliation at the hands of the beastly Huns, you come in the night and steal my baby from me? You, an American! It is more than I can bear. It is of you I ask the question, for you alone can answer, you *canaille!* What, then, has become of my child, my little Suzette?"

CHAPTER XXIII

MONSIEUR FLAMMEAU'S STORY

ALTHOUGH the knowledge could in no way have helped her in her present predicament, it might have solaced her somewhat could she have known that during the preceding night as her slow train rambled and rumbled on its way, Captain John Percy Doyle, Jr., passed within a few yards of her, and all the time he was railing at the slowness of his passage, for he now knew the story of Suzette's disappearance from her home, and anxious and worried, he was eager to get to Paris where he hoped to be able to find some trace of her.

It was the day following the girl's flight that the Faures' car had drawn up before her home and the justly irate father advanced to meet the man who he believed responsible for his daughter's running away. Mr. Faure, seeing instantly that there was trouble of some kind, had alighted before the astonished Doyle could say a word in refutation of the angry man's accusation, and it was some little while before the father was convinced that the man

whom he so much disliked was as innocent as he in one sense of the girl's unaccountable absence.

Anxious and worried as he was before Reddy's arrival, the little man after hearing what Mr. Faure had to say was hardly able to keep his nervous self still long enough to hear the statements that were being made to him. He doubted even the word of this gentleman of whom he had frequently heard during the war because of his great activities among the stricken families of the French and Belgians who had been impoverished by the war.

Finally he was prevailed upon to enter his home and carry on the discussion of the events there rather than on the street, and soon the entire party, augmented by the presence of Madame Flammeau, were seated in the drawing-room listening to the little man's story.

It appeared that in former years Doyle's father and Monsieur had had several business deals and that the smart Yankee had gotten the better of the Belgian much to the latter's chagrin, for he prided himself on his business acumen. When Reddy, following in his father's footsteps, came to Europe in the interests of the old firm he, too, encountered Suzette's father and was introduced to his wife and daughter. On learning that Reddy was the son of his former business competitor Monsieur became unduly prejudiced against him, and on subsequent

visits forbade him to enter his home, for he viewed with concern the growing intimacy between this Yankee and his only daughter. Later when he discovered that letters were being exchanged between the two he forbade any further intercourse whatsoever.

As is usual, such a step only increased the liking of the two young people for each other, and it must be confessed that Madame Flammeau was their staunch supporter, aider and abettor. Then came the war. Belgium was overrun with Germans. It had been difficult, at times impossible, for letters to pass through the lines, and not until after the armistice was signed did Reddy and Suzette again meet, but of this meeting the father was in ignorance.

This was the status of affairs, as Suzette's father knew them when on returning home the night before he had found the house in darkness and his family asleep in bed as he firmly believed. On descending for breakfast he had been surprised to find his wife crying her eyes out. When he inquired the reason for her tears she handed to him a letter which she held crumpled in her hand, saying bitterly as she did so:

"See what your harshness has brought upon us. Our daughter has eloped. The ungrateful girl!"

Hardly able to adjust his pince-nez, so badly

shaken was he, Monsieur read the note which Suzette had written:

"Dearest Mother and Father: I have gone to Paris with Captain Doyle and if you wish to see me before we leave for America wire promptly to Mrs. John Percy Doyle, Jr., care of the United States Ambassador, Paris. Good-bye. Your loving daughter, Suzette."

All the morning torn between his love for his child and his stiff-necked pride, Monsieur had fought his battle unaided, except by slurring insinuations, put in at timely intervals by his wife. Finally he had despatched the telegram and returning to his home after the ignominious defeat thus recorded, who should he see descending at his door but the very man who was the cause of all his humiliation.

"Now, young man," he concluded bitterly, "you have taken my daughter from me. Tell me what you have done with her? Why is she not with you and these friends of yours?"

During the recital of Monsieur's woes, Reddy had hardly been able to wait for him to arrive at the end of his tale. Now he rose, and with his brain in a turmoil, answered:

"Monsieur Flammeau, you are mistaken. As my friends will tell you I have been recovering

from a wound inflicted while in Germany nearly four weeks ago. Most of that time I have been in bed. Two days ago we started to motor to Paris and I have been on the road with these friends continuously since then. I know nothing of Suzette."

Reddy's announcement came as a bombshell to Suzette's parents. Madame looked especially incredulous, and starting to her feet with a look of fear which before she had not felt for she thought this whole affair merely a part of the elopement which she had aided, she exclaimed in horror:

"But, Monsieur, you must know! Only last night you sent your man here for her. He knew all about the arrangements we had agreed upon. He said they would meet you on the road to Paris in an automobile. I—I—She—She went away with him, and ——" and there the poor lady broke down completely.

Fifteen minutes later such of the little details as were known to any of those present had been told, and still no explanation of the girl's whereabouts was forthcoming. The Prefecture of Police had been called upon and his verdict was that the girl had been kidnapped; at this statement Madame was put to bed, hysterical, and Monsieur was nearly on the verge of collapse. At the suggestion of Mr. Faure his entire party boarded the afternoon ex-

press for Paris where it was hoped that some trace of the missing girl might be found, and before they left the disagreement of years before between the families, Flammeau and Doyle, had been forgotten forever in this vital question which touched so closely the hearts of all concerned.

CHAPTER XXIV

AT THE GARE DU NORD

The whole town turned out when Captain Richard K. Comstock, pursuant to orders received the day following his sister's departure, wended his way to the banks of the Rhine and boarded the trim little patrol vessel, manned by members of the United States Marine Corps, which was to take him to Headquarters at Coblenz where he was to report. During the time Dick had administered the affairs of his small area he had, by strict attention to detail and impartiality in his dealings with friend and foe, endeared himself to the townsfolk in a most remarkable manner. As for the men of his company, they felt his going more keenly than their smiling faces would indicate, for they were both glad and sorry to see him depart. Glad for his sake, but sorry for theirs, especially so, those men who had been under his command since the company was originally organized back in the good old U. S. A.

Perhaps the one person who felt his departure more keenly than all the others was Lieutenant Tommy Turner.

"I don't know how I'll get along without you, old man," said Tommy wistfully as their hands met in a vice-like grip, "but—but I'll stick it out, even though it's going to be hard sledding."

"Cheer up, Tommy! You will all be coming along soon, and think how fine it will be when you go swinging up dear old Fifth Avenue to the tune of 'Semper Fidelis' and the accompaniment of that crowd of our own people lining the street, yelling themselves hoarse because they're so darned proud of our marines. Golly! the thought of that makes me regret not being able to stay here to the finish with you and the old outfit—my outfit. I don't understand why I should be plucked out of here as if I was a useless feather in a duck's wing. What in the world do they want of me back at Headquarters in Washington, D. C.? I've never had any of these staff jobs before and I'll not know how to act. Who in the dickens ever suggested me as an aide, anyhow?"

"Can't prove it by me," responded Tommy gloomily enough, "but if you hear of any more of those dog-robbing, coffee-cooling cinches pining for a good man to fill 'em, I'll consent to your proposing me for the billet, and I'll reconsider what I remarked a few moments ago."

Gathered about on the high bank of the river, men, women and children stood looking on as Dick

boarded the little vessel. The marines in their best "bib and tucker" were massed at the landing, and never were cheers for a departing commander more whole-souled and vigorous than those which re-echoed from shore to shore as the lines were cast off and the boat began its journey down the stream.

The usually stolid Germans themselves were awakened from their lethargy, and one stout individual appointed himself "cheer leader" and above the din of the marines' voices came the quick, guttural notes of an impromptu attempt at a cheer for the "Captain Commandant, Dick Comstock, U. S. M. C."

"You may take your choice of routes to Brest," said the General upon Dick's reporting soon after the patrol boat had docked at Coblenz. "If you wish you may delay your reporting at Camp Pontanezen and spend a few days in Paris, but I imagine you are wanted back in Washington within a reasonable time or else the orders for you would not have been worded as they are. It is unfortunate they did not arrive sooner so that you might have accompanied your sister and her friends the entire way."

As a result, Dick wasted but little time in Coblenz. Now that he was started on the return trail he was anxious to get back to his own United States. He longed to see that wonderful bronze

statue at the entrance to New York Harbor. He felt he could now appreciate the significance of it more than ever before, and above all things he longed to be scanning the waiting people on the wharf when his transport should finally warp her way alongside, for he knew that somewhere among that sea of upturned eager faces would be two he held most dear—the faces of his mother and father.

As the train upon which he travelled rambled and rumbled across the country over which a few months before he had plodded at the head of his company in the wake of the retreating enemy, he could not help but chafe at every stop and station, and although he was quite familiar with continental travel in Europe it seemed to him as though the tiny coaches and engine were altogether too small to make time and hold together long enough to reach their final destination. With each passing hour he was becoming more and more excited and anxious. He could not at the same time realize that he was about to leave all this life of war and strife and bitterness behind him.

What a surprise it would be to his sister and the Faures when he walked in on them at their hotel in Paris, and without a doubt it could be arranged so that they all might embark on the same transport and together they would cross the broad Atlantic.

"When Mother and Dad hear the good news

they will go wild with delight," he thought, half aloud, as he gazed out of the car window. "Ursula and I arriving together. And won't they be more than overjoyed to see Ursula again? Just to think, she has been over here since the summer of nineteen thirteen,—nearly six years. Had it not been for the war she would have finished her studies and been back home three years ago."

It was with such thoughts as these that his mind was filled, as his eyes watched the landscape spread before them. How different were these portions of France through which the train was now passing from the peaceful, undisturbed lands along the Rhine, through Alsace and Lorraine and Luxemburg. Here great stretches of barren wastes—the vestiges of the cruel war, but already the work of reconstruction had begun among the razed villages and battle-ploughed fields, yet many years must go and come before the scars should become even partially obliterated.

A short way from Paris the train stopped at an insignificant station, and while waiting impatiently for it to start Dick stepped out on the platform to stretch his long legs and get some of the kinks of travel out of his muscles. As he was about to return to his compartment he noticed a man in uniform and a young woman rush through the gates as they were closing and after an animated dis-

cussion with the porter they hurriedly entered a second-class carriage and the door slammed behind them. There was something very familiar about both the soldier and the woman accompanying him, but the impression was so fleeting that it was impossible to say what it might have been that attracted him other than the fact of their late arrival.

"Some Doughboy and a newly acquired sweetheart, most likely. Probably taking her back to the States as his wife where she will be as happy as a duck out of water," mused Dick, swinging aboard his own section as it came abreast of him. "Funny why I should imagine that there is anything familiar about either of them;" thereupon he dismissed the subject from his mind.

At noon the train puffed slowly into the *Gare du Nord,* and gathering up his hand luggage Dick made his way through the station to the street intending to hail a taxi and proceed immediately to the hotel where the Faures and Ursula were stopping.

At his signal a taxi cab pulled up to the curb and Dick was soon giving his directions to the chauffeur. He was about to step into the car when for some unknown reason he looked back at the wonderful building behind him, and in doing so he again saw the soldier and the girl, and again the feeling of familiarity swept over him. There was

no doubt that the girl was pretty. They approached him at an angle and he could see that they were evidently having a heated discussion. The man's face was turned away from Dick, and he was apparently trying to explain away something to the girl, but she would hardly listen; meanwhile her quick glances scanned the faces of passers-by, of people emerging from the station, of those standing about, as if expecting to find someone who was to meet her. Her looks even took in Dick as he stood waiting by his machine, but she turned away in disappointment. They had now reached the curb and the soldier called a passing taxi. When it had paused opposite them he motioned for the girl to enter but she refused, shaking her head and voicing her objections in a rapid undertone.

Interested in spite of his own haste Dick stood with one foot on the running-board of his waiting car while he watched his late fellow travellers. More talk followed the girl's refusal, and then the soldier took her roughly by the arms and tried to force her to enter the waiting cab.

This was more than the young American officer could stand, and well knowing that he might be heaping troubles upon his own head by attempting to interfere in what appeared to be a family dissension, he nevertheless advanced toward the couple intending to offer his assistance to the young

woman. As he drew nearer the girl's eyes were again turned in his direction and in their dark depths he could easily read fear and an appeal for help. The next moment into those eyes came a look of doubt, of unbelief, and then with a glad cry of recognition she broke from the grasp of her escort and ran toward Dick.

"Oh, *Monsieur Capitaine*—Captaine Comstock. Help me—help me," she cried, and the next moment she was tremblingly clinging to Dick's arms and sobbing violently.

"Why, it is Mademoiselle Flammeau!" said Dick, overcome with surprise. "What are you doing here? How may I assist you?"

"Do not let that man take me, Monsieur. Oh, help me, sir. He has lied to me. I should have known better than to believe him," and her hold on Dick's arm became more tense.

Paris is no different from any other place under the sun and the little scene being enacted in front of the great railroad station was already attracting the curious. At best the situation was embarrassing and Dick was at a loss as to the best course to pursue.

"Get into my taxi, Mademoiselle," he said. "I will be back in a moment," and helping her inside he saw her sink back on the cushions and immediately cover her face with her handkerchief. Clos-

ing the door he turned, intending to go and interview the soldier who had accompanied Suzette, but he was too late; neither the soldier nor his cab were anywhere in sight, and a street gamin called out that the man had jumped into his conveyance and driven away as rapidly as the law would allow.

Turning back to his own machine Dick reopened the door.

"Where do you wish to go, Mademoiselle?" he inquired.

"Anywhere—anywhere. Only please get me away from him."

For a second Dick stood there pondering.

"Have you no luggage?" he finally inquired.

"No, nothing, except my small travelling-bag. You see, I did not have any time to bring more."

"And where is the bag you speak of?"

"Why, Monsieur Doyle has that. Oh, I never thought; he carried it to the car and put it inside, just before he tried to force me to enter."

"Monsieur Doyle?" repeated Dick, questioningly—amazed again. Surely this girl must be out of her head. The man dressed in soldier's clothing, though there was something familiar about him, could never be mistaken for Reddy.

"You mean to say that Monsieur Doyle was

with you? That he has your luggage? That it was he who was trying to force you into that cab a moment ago?"

"Ah, Monsieur, please let us not talk of that now. I beg of you take me away from here at once. The crowd frightens me. We may be arrested. Please, Monsieur. See, here comes a gendarme now, Monsieur Captaine."

Glancing over his shoulder Dick saw a member of the Parisian police pushing his way through the crowd of men and women eagerly craning their necks to see what was happening. He hesitated no longer; with a word to the driver he jumped into the car and a moment later the machine was gliding on its way, amidst a scattering cheer from certain members of the good-natured and uncomprehending audience.

Surprised and attracted by the noise Dick turned his head to look back and as he did so, he saw, standing on the outskirts of the assemblage, the familiar face and uniformed figure of Reddy Doyle. In his right hand he held a travelling-bag and tucked under his left arm was an officer's clothing roll, while on Reddy's face was a look of anger, amazement and disbelief.

For a second only did Dick see him, as the cab was now gaining headway rapidly, dodging in and out of the traffic, but Dick knew that here at last

was a chance to finally untangle this web of complication, and he did not intend to lose such an opportunity. If Reddy Doyle was mixed up in the affairs of Suzette, and everything certainly seemed to point that way, now was the time to get at the truth of the affair. Leaning forward he called through the window for the driver to return to the station at once, but by the time they had circled about and reached the spot which they had so recently left in such haste, the crowd had been dispersed and his search of the station for Doyle was unrewarded.

Suzette had not heard Dick's directions to the cabman and her eyes were still covered when he jumped from the cab on his futile errand. By the time he returned, however, Suzette was looking about her in consternation.

"I thought we had left this place. Why did you return?" she questioned.

"As we were leaving I saw Captain Doyle standing near the crowd with your luggage," said Dick, "so I returned at once hoping to get it for you and also an explanation from him, but he has gone."

A strange look came over the girl's face. "Captain Doyle?" she questioned, and then before Dick could answer, she said in pleading tones, "Oh, please do not stop longer. I have money. I can

supply my needs. I never wish to see that man again. Please take me away."

"But where shall I take you, Mademoiselle? Have you friends here?"

"No, I have no friends nor relatives in Paris. I do not know what to do," and thereupon followed another spasm of weeping, broken by hysterical sentences as the young woman grew more and more excited. "Why did I ever leave home? Why did I believe that man? My father will never permit me to return. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Calm yourself, Mademoiselle Suzette," said Dick, feeling very sorry for the distracted girl. "I will take you to my sister and her friends. She is in Paris and she will be able to straighten out your troubles, I feel certain. We will go there at once."

Twenty minutes later the cab drew up before the door of the hotel, and telling Suzette to wait, Dick entered the hostelry and approached the clerk.

"I am Captain Richard Comstock, United States Marine," he said, "and I wish to see my sister, Miss Comstock, at once. I hope she is in."

"Ah, oui, M'sieu', but your seester, the Mees Cumstook, she has depart already."

"What, she has left Paris?" inquired Dick, speaking now in French.

"Yes, she and her friends took the train not more

than a half hour ago for Brest. She, Monsieur, Madame and Mademoiselle Faure, and Captain Doyle—they have all gone. I am sorry."

"You're not one-half as sorry as I am," responded Dick, gloomily enough. "What in thunder am I going to do now?" he mused aloud. "With a good-looking young woman on my hands, and no place to leave her. She will begin to believe in me almost as much as she believes in Doyle if this sort of stuff keeps up. Well, anyway, I might as well go out and tell her and face the music. Darn these women anyway!"

Approaching the cab where Suzette was waiting patiently for his return, he said to her:

"I am very sorry, Mademoiselle, but my sister and her friends have left for Brest. They have been gone from the hotel hardly an hour. It was my intention to stop over in Paris providing they were here, but now I, too, must leave immediately, or at least as soon as the next train departs, for I am hoping to return to America on the same transport with them, and if I delay I fear I may be too late."

"They have gone?" and Suzette for a moment was nonplussed, then with a smile breaking out through the dark frown on her face, she said with decision: "Then, Monsieur Captaine, I will accompany you."

"But, you know—er—that is impossible," exclaimed Dick.

What could the girl be thinking of; travelling over the country with any man she happened to fall in with? What kind of a game was she playing? It would never do for him to take her along on the journey. If this kept up, the next thing he knew she would be saying she would accompany him to New York. Dick's face depicted the thoughts which flitted through his mind, and the girl in the cab read them without effort.

"Do not worry, Monsieur, it is the solution to my problem. I am happy that you mentioned Brest, or else I would not have thought of this facile way out of my difficulties."

"That is all right so far as it goes," said Dick, rather ungallantly it is true, but he could not well be blamed for his feelings in the matter, "but there are reasons why you should not go to Brest with me, Mademoiselle. In the first place what will you do when you get there?"

"Ah, that is the solution of which I spoke. My mother's sister lives there. Her husband has been in business there for many years. She will receive me and be glad that I have come to her. She has wanted me to visit her for a long time. They have no children of their own. You cannot refuse to give me your aid and assistance under the circum-

stances. I could not possibly remain alone in Paris."

So, feeling that he had no other way out of the dilemma, Dick finally, but with misgivings nevertheless, consented to act as Suzette's escort for the remainder of the journey.

Once more the taxicab was put in motion and this time Suzette was a far different girl from the one who had so weepingly occupied the seat at his side on the journey from the Gare du Nord. Going to the station they made their reservations for the evening train, the first train out, and although Dick offered to pay the fare, Suzette insisted on supplying the money for her own ticket. After this they went to a famous restaurant for something to eat, and then Dick had to accompany her to various *marchés* and wait interminable hours, so it seemed to him, while Suzette made necessary purchases to last her through the coming train ride. So long in fact did she take that they barely caught their train when the time came for it to leave, and as they rushed past the guard at the gates, Dick could not help but recall the little station north of Paris where a similar scene had been enacted that same morning, but with another man playing the leading rôle, and as they were bustled into their compartment by the officious porter, whom should he find occupying one corner of the first-class car-

riage, but his former chum and classmate at the old Bankley High School, now a Lieutenant-Commander in the United States Navy, Gordon Graham.

Here indeed was a situation, and one which Dick failed to enjoy. But he rose to the occasion nobly, and with no appearance of embarrassment, he got through the introductions, and soon the three young people were conversing animatedly, but every now and then Dick caught Gordon looking at him in a quizzical manner. He knew there must be a day of reckoning and he could hardly expect Gordon to believe his story even though he told the truth.

On through the dusk the train sped, and at the first station beyond Paris where a reasonable stop was to be made the two young men prepared to leave Suzette in full possession of the compartment while they sauntered up and down the platform. As Dick left he asked permission of Suzette to explain to Monsieur Graham the conditions under which they were journeying to Brest, assuring her that he would mention no names. And it was with relief that he joined Graham a few moments after and related to him Suzette's story, as he knew it, from the time he had first seen her in her home in Belgium to the present, but not once did he mention the name of Reddy Doyle. Had Gordon Graham not known that Dick Comstock was not

one to dally with the truth, he might have disbelieved the rather fantastic story.

"You speak as if you knew the man who has caused her all this trouble, Dick, but at the same time it seems to me that you have a right to get from the girl the parts that are missing in this romance. If I were you I would not hesitate a minute to ask her to explain the whole thing from beginning to end. You say she never seems to want to do so, but I say that you have earned the right to hear it, and I would make her do it. How do you know but this aunt story of hers is all a hoax? You are too easy where a pretty face, or for that matter, where a female is concerned. They can pull the wool over your eyes with ease, my boy."

"Well, you see, Gordon, I've not had the experience with the weaker sex that you naval officers seem to get, and I'm afraid I don't ——"

"Thanks, Dick, save your blarney. Only I happen to know you are being a bit sarcastic; but in any case I am going to suggest something to you which I believe under the circumstances is the best way out of your difficulties, and that is, ask Mademoiselle the address of her aunt and send the lady a wire requesting her to meet her niece on arrival. You can't go tripping it around Brest with a young and attractive girl hanging to your coat-tails. You have got to get rid of her in case you want to sail

on the first boat leaving for New York. And incidentally that is why I am returning to Brest tonight. You see, I am Executive Officer of the transport *General Grant,* and we are expecting to leave to-morrow night or the following day. You come along with me and I'll let you share the finest suite of rooms you ever saw on any ocean greyhound in your life, but you will have to work fast."

Then it was that Dick explained how he expected to meet Ursula and the Faures and how he was hoping they all might cross together. At the mention of Ursula's name Gordon's face was alight with pleasure.

"Well, let me tell you this, Dick," said he, and behind the banter there was more feeling than he cared to show, "if by any chance a delay of a day or so will get you all together on our ship, and if there is no other way out of it, I'll be darned if I don't drop a monkey wrench in the machinery myself to gain time, and that's no idle brag, either."

On returning to the train they found Suzette wrapped in rugs and sound asleep in her corner, so Dick delayed putting his resolution into effect until she should awake.

CHAPTER XXV

CLEARED SKIES

"CAPTAIN DOYLE of the American Army is below and wishes to see Monsieur alone, if he may," announced a servant, when, in answer to a discreet knocking, Mr. Faure opened the door.

"Show the Captain up at once," came the reply, and a little later Reddy was ushered into the cheery sitting-room of the suite which Mr. Faure had engaged at the hotel on his arrival in Brest.

"Come right in, my boy," he said, shaking hands with his caller. "Mrs. Faure and the girls have gone out to see Camp Pontanezen; that is, it was their intention to do so an hour or more ago when I went out to call on some old friends living here. It is said that young marine Brigadier-General in charge has made a model camp out of an impossible mud hole, and it has been so much talked about that Ursula, who as you know is a Marine through and through, must needs see that before anything else. But come, tell me what success you have had. I imagine you must have heard something or you would not have abandoned your quest so early. Sit down, and make yourself at home, while I ring for

some refreshment. You look tired out and in need of a good long rest. I hope you have not overtaxed your strength, my young friend."

The older man had purposely rambled on, for in spite of his words he knew Reddy was the bearer of bad tidings and he wanted to do his best to make the younger man feel at ease, and that he had in his host a sympathizer, and well wisher.

Reddy dropped into the proffered chair disconsolately enough. His eyes, dark-ringed beneath, gazed unseeingly at the gay carpet designs, now brilliant in the rays of the afternoon sunshine.

"I am glad that Mrs. Faure and the girls are not in, sir," he began, "for I wish to tell my story to you alone," and his voice was lifeless and very low.

"I am afraid," he continued, "that what I have to relate is going to hurt you also, Mr. Faure, but you can best tell whether or not my story should be told to the others. Personally, I could not stand seeing them just now, so, after I finish, I will go out to the camp myself, and there make my arrangements for my transportation to the States. You will soon understand why it is I cannot accept your kind offices in securing my passage in the same vessel with you and the others."

Again Reddy paused, his dull stare at the carpet never changing. Mr. Faure drew up a chair near

him and sat down to wait for the young fellow to proceed, feeling it would be better to let him talk on in his own way. He could see that some great bitterness had come into Reddy's life, and of course it must have something to do with the disappearance of the girl, Suzette.

"After you received word yesterday morning that your transport was due to sail early this evening, and you had to leave Paris in order to make your final arrangement down here, I decided that there was no use in my remaining longer in the city. I had done all there that was possible. I had informed the authorities, French, English, Belgian and American. I even went so far as to engage a private detective concern, which had been recommended to me, to take up the hunt. I believed that it would be best for me to return to Belgium, to Suzette's home, and from there as a starting point, endeavor to trace her movements after she left her father's house the night previous to our arrival. The thought came to me that by interviewing the taxicab stands, and the garages in the town, I might possibly run across a clue, for it seemed certain that anyone taking her away against her will would not attempt travel by rail."

"Excellent reasoning, Reddy—we should have thought of that before; but go on, pardon my interruption."

"After seeing you off for Brest I called up all the various headquarters and agencies to ascertain if anything had as yet been discovered, and being assured that no reports had been made up to that time, I proceeded to the Gare du Nord prepared to leave by the first train for the north. As I was about to enter the station I noticed a small crowd had collected around a taxicab standing near the curb in front of the station. A gendarme was elbowing his way to the center of this crowd and instinctively I stopped to see what the excitement might be. Possibly it might have some connection with Suzette. Perhaps she and the man who lured her away might have just arrived in Paris and already the police were acting,—making an arrest. You see, I was so incapable of coping with the mystery which confronted me, and feeling that chance alone must guide my search, I decided that I, too, would join that crowd and see what was going on. As I reached the far edge of the people, I saw ——"

He stopped, swallowed with difficulty, and was for a second unable to speak.

"You saw ——" began Mr. Faure in his eagerness for Reddy to proceed.

"I saw—Captain Richard Comstock, and ——"

"Then he has arrived in Paris, has he? Good—I am glad to hear it. I feared that we might not

get him in time. Did he say he was coming right down? Did he not come along with you?"

"No, Mr. Faure, Captain Comstock did not come on to Brest with me. I did not speak with him, sir. I tried to—but he got into the taxicab and drove off before I came out of my surprise and stupor at seeing him. You see, sir, he was not alone. He had a woman in the cab with him. It was—Mademoiselle Suzette Flammeau."

"Suzette Flammeau—Dick Comstock!" exclaimed Mr. Faure, starting to his feet and visibly overcome with this unexpected piece of news.

"Mademoiselle Flammeau and Captain Comstock," reiterated Reddy dully, "and as they drove off he saw me standing there on the edge of the crowd looking directly at him. For the moment I was too astonished and hurt to know what I was doing. I saw him lean forward and speak to the chauffeur, and then I ran into the street. I fairly leaped into an empty taxi which was passing at the time and endeavored to follow, but in my blind surge of anger I had lost track of their car and though we proceeded along the avenue in the same direction for some distance I never came across them. After an hour's search I gave up the chase, which was no chase, and—well, what was the use anyway? Dick Comstock has always won where there has been any question of rivalry,—any con-

test between us. I had lost, sir, and must take my medicine like a man;—but it is very bitter," and poor Reddy dropped his head into his hands, while his shoulders shook with the strength of his emotion.

"But Reddy, you may have been mistaken. Your imagination may have made you think you saw them, and even if you did you cannot tell what circumstances brought them together. I am sure that ——"

"No, Mr. Faure, I could never mistake either of them. And Dick saw me. He could have stopped. Besides, don't you remember that remark made by Tommy Turner the day we were leaving for Coblenz to the effect that Dick had saved Mademoiselle Flammeau's life and that she thought him a wonderful hero. She never mentioned this to me. Why she did not, is more than I can understand under the circumstances."

Mr. Faure was about to reply when the opening of the door leading to the room occupied by Ursula and Marie attracted his attention. Looking up he saw standing in the doorway his daughter, her face white and strained, her usually lithe and supple body stiff and unbending.

Slowly the girl advanced into the room.

"I happened to overhear most of what has been said," she began slowly. "You must not think me

an intentional eavesdropper, but I had a slight headache, and did not feel like going to the camp with Mother and Ursula, so lay down for a little sleep. It was not until Reddy had gotten well on in his story that I fully realized someone was talking in this room and then it was too late to close my ears. But Father—Reddy, there must be a mistake—some plausible explanation—there must be," and now her eyes looked appealingly into those of her father's, as though he would assure her in her belief.

At the sound of Marie's voice Doyle sprang to his feet. He saw the look on the girl's face and knew he had unwittingly given her a pain as hard as his own to bear. He started to make some apology—some amend for his remarks, but before he could speak the door to the hall was flung open and Mrs. Faure, followed by Ursula, came rushing to the room, their faces wreathed in smiles.

The sight of the tableau before them caused both to stop. Their questioning glances went from one to the other of the actors in the little scene and finally resting on Reddy, both exclaimed, and together: "Why, it's Reddy Doyle!" and Ursula added, "How in the world did you get here? Dick said he saw you headed for the Gare du Nord only yesterday afternoon, and that when he went back two minutes later to look for you, he discovered an

express train had just pulled out for Belgium. He thought you must have gone on that, and, oh, Reddy, I have seen Suzette and she is the sweetest, prettiest little thing imaginable. You are the luckiest man I know."

"Seen Suzette!" "Seen Dick!"

It was now the turn of Mr. Faure and Reddy Doyle to exclaim and stand with their mouths wide open, but Marie went to her mother and quickly drew her through the door into her room where no one might see and read the wonderful look of gladness, nor the telltale blushes which covered her pretty face, and there she proceeded to weep for joy at what she had just heard told.

"Why, yes, of course, it's Dick I have seen. He is down-stairs now, and will be up in a moment or two. We found him out at Camp Pontanezen where he had gone to report. And, Reddy, he found your Suzette for you, and rescued her again, and then he and Gordon Graham brought her down to her aunt who lives here in Brest. Poor child, she will be wild with happiness when she knows you are here. Why, Reddy, what's the matter?" she inquired anxiously, for Doyle had dropped heavily into the chair behind him and again covered his face with his hands.

At a nod from Mr. Faure, Ursula turned and joined Marie and her mother in the adjoining room,

and by the time Dick tramped up the hall and knocked at the partially opened door, a pair of brawny arms were thrown about him, and Reddy Doyle was shouting in his ear in deafening tones:

"Dick Comstock, if you were a girl I'd kiss you, and so long as we are in France, where it's the fashion between men, I'm going to do it anyway," and with the words there was the sound of two loud smacks, as Reddy gave his old rival the French military salute in a most vigorous manner.

"Hey, there! Who in thunder gave you the right to pin medals on me?" said Dick, freeing himself and laughing heartily.

"Never mind that," replied Reddy. "You come along and show me where she is, and on the double, too," and he started to drag Dick toward the door.

"Go with him, Dick, and put the poor fellow out of his misery," said Mr. Faure. "But don't stay away any longer than is necessary for the purpose in hand, because we all want to hear what you have to say for yourself, and also how you happen to be here when by all rights you should be keeping the peace in the German villages along the Rhine," but even before he had completed his remarks, Reddy Doyle had forcibly hauled Dick from the room.

As the two happy Americans hurried along the streets of the city their tongues wagged as never

before, for there were explanations to make, and more explanations: questions asked and questions to be answered and more questions. Then when they arrived within a few blocks from the home of Madame de Langrange, Suzette's aunt, Dick reached in his breast pocket and hauled forth a few worn letters and presented them to his companion.

"Here, Reddy, are some letters which have been in my keeping for a long while. Yes, I've read them, and they have caused me much unhappiness, too, but you have explained them satisfactorily, and so I give them back to you. I can do so now that everything is straightened out in my mind about Suzette and you. You will remember you dropped them that night I chased you over the wall."

"Wall! What wall?" questioned Reddy.

"Why, the wall in back of Monsieur Flammeau's house, of course. The night we entered the town and there were such big doings," said Dick, a bit disappointed that Doyle would not acknowledge his act, now that everything had been explained away.

"Why, Dick, I wasn't in the town that night. These letters were stolen from me at the time my field-glasses were taken. You remember I told you about that when we were searching Friedrich Hoffman's effects."

"By George, Reddy, if I'm not the dumbest dumb-bell that ever walked on two legs. Shoot me for a fish! That just puts a finish to the whole thing. Why, of course—now I see it all. Suzette told me at the time. His name was Doyle, and how I could have gone all these months and never thought of that before is certainly due a leather medal. And, by jingo, I'll bet it was that same scoundrel who succeeded in making her believe he was your messenger, and enticed her away from her home, but how in the dickens he discovered you intended to elope with her and marry her in Paris, is deeper than my poor addled brain can fathom."

"Elope with her? Marry her in Paris?" parroted Reddy. "Why, Dick, didn't she tell you that we were married four months ago? You see her mother helped us, but for certain good reasons we were to keep it secret for a while longer."

"Drive on, you old Benedict," said Dick, slapping Reddy soundly on the back. "You lucky old redhead, go on up those steps right there and greet your Mrs. Doyle," and, with a parting shake of hands, Dick turned and wended his way back from whence he came.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOME AGAIN

THE transport, of which Lieutenant-Commander Gordon Graham, U. S. N., was the executive officer, with the contrariness which frequently Fate or Chance or whatever the thing is which governs the destinies of mankind evinces, did not sail on schedule time. To the Faures and to Ursula and her brother the delay was unwelcome, but to little Mrs. Reddy Doyle it came as an especial favor of the Gods, for it had given her time to answer the delayed wire which her father had sent to the Embassy in Paris, and her parents were due to arrive in Brest an hour before the new sailing hour.

Dick had told Ursula of the remark Gordon had made while on the train coming down from Paris, and as a result that young man was receiving no end of chaffing from the members of the jolly party assembled on the promenade deck of the enormous vessel while waiting for the last formalities before the great hawsers were cast off and the mighty engines were set in motion, turning the curved blades of the bronze propellers underneath the graceful stern, which turning would not cease until the

shores of America were sighted; until the guardian lights of Sandy Hook had been rounded, the Narrows passed, and Liberty, holding aloft her flaming torch, towered above the highest spar; till the wonderful man-made monuments of lower Manhattan beckoned with their serrated horizon line; till finally the puffing tugs pushed and pulled, strained and shoved the hero-laden leviathan into her berthing space, where waited the aching and the sad, the joyous and the glad, the friends and relatives of the defenders of our country.

Some of those heroes were sadly wounded beyond all hopes of recovery: some were bent but not broken, some fortunate enough to have passed through the terrible ordeal unscratched and unscathed, but all, no matter what their condition were, unbeaten conquerors, each in his or her own right. Yes, there were heroic women aboard that grand vessel. Women who had done their " bit " as faithfully, loyally and self-sacrificedly as any of those men on board, and not the least of these were Mrs. Faure, Marie, Ursula and the bright-eyed, black-haired little bride.

About this group of women hovered a goodly gathering of young men, and a sprinkling of an older generation. Leaning far over the rail, Mrs. John Percy Doyle, Jr., was chattering volubly in French to a stout, little man, fussing nervously at

the edge of the pier, while a happy-faced, handsome woman held him by the coat-tail to keep him from taking a near-sighted step into the watery basin in his excitement. Somewhere a band was playing, and men were cheering here and there. Messages were being shouted back and forth in a dozen tongues. Late arrivals came hurrying down the quay at the last moment. A dainty French girl was seen hurrying along the concrete roadway to throw a bouquet of flowers at a doughboy whose head was sticking out of an air port several tiers below the promenade deck. With the agility of an African Dodger he pulled his head inside, for the shot was a good one and when the flowers followed through the porthole a cheer greeted the graceful marksman. Soon the head reappeared to be met by a storm of playful abuse at the temerity of the owner in departing and leaving a broken heart behind him.

Last minute messages were being rushed up the gangway, and finally the heavy lines were one by one released, then, as the gangway was about to be lifted by the steam and electric crane, a soldier made his way vigorously through the crowd and ran up apparently to deliver a telegram which he held in his hand. Suzette, still bending far over the rail to hear the last words of her parents, saw the man as he stumbled over one of the cleats mid-

way of the gangplank. She gave him one intense look, then turning very pale, she pointed him out to Reddy and Dick who were standing near by.

"There he is. There is the man who took me away. The man with the beard coming up the gangplank."

The two young officers took but one glance and a moment later they were pushing their way along the decks to reach the nearest ladder leading below.

At the top of the gangway, a ship's officer halted the late arrival.

"Here; where are you going?"

"Message for one of the officers who sent me ashore a half hour ago on duty, sir," came the reply, and the man attempted to move on.

"Not so fast there, Bo," said a sergeant, wearing his pistol lightly slung to his right hip. "Deliver your message to me and I'll see that it is delivered to the right man, and if you've been sent ashore on duty where is your pass? Come, let's see it. There's too many of you fellers tried that same old gag to get by here without something better than this story. Next time try a new one."

And right at that moment Reddy Doyle burst upon the scene, his face aflame with anger, while behind him the would-be stowaway discerned the grim features of Captain Dick. Without a second's hesitation the soldier executed a *volte face*

THE TWO SOUGHT THE UPPER DECK

and started to rush madly down the steep gangway.

Again he stumbled. He put out his hand to save himself. There was a sudden cry of warning, and then a deep hush, for he had missed the rope rail which guarded the sides of the plank and his body seemed to shoot out into space, and go crashing down between the steel sides of the ship and the concrete lip of the pier, finally to strike the water, many feet below, with a great splash.

When the body was recovered, in the pockets of the man were found the identification tags of Private Haskell, and had it not been for the information given by Dick and Doyle, the German spy might have been placed at rest in an honored grave. At last Friedrich Hoffman had paid the final penalty and even though he was an enemy his tragic death caused a sudden dampening of the gaiety which before this had been everywhere prevalent. Soon the identity of the man was noised throughout the crowd, and as soon as possible the lifeless body was removed.

Now came the warning, thunderous blasts of the whistles. Deep down in the bowels of the great ship sounded the jangling of the engine-room bells, and slowly, majestically the vessel began to move.

Once again the band struck up a lively tune. The crowds cheered. Hats and handkerchiefs were

waving to and fro. Then a great volume of noise arose from the decks where the enlisted men had assembled.

"Come on, fellers, let's give 'em a real cheer this time. All ready? Come on, let's go," and standing up where the majority of the men could see him, a jolly, red-faced sailor of Uncle Sam's Navy gave the signal with his white cap crushed in his hand as a baton.

"Hip! Hip!" he roared. Off came the overseas caps; up rose the happy, strong, young voices, in a rousing "H-o-o-ray!"

"Hip! Hip!" he repeated in quick cadence, and again followed an answering "H-o-o-ray!"

"Hip! Hip!" a third time, and every man and woman in sight joined in the final response, "H-o-o-ray!"

Slowly at first the vessel moved away, ever gaining more and more speed, till finally the watchers on the decks saw the shores of France gradually fade away in the distance.

"Did you know that Old Mike is on board?" whispered Dick into Marie's ear. "Yes, they brought him down a little while before we left. Come on, let's go to the sick bay and say 'hello' if the surgeons will permit it, and see if there is anything we can do to make the trip any more pleasant for him."

Without a word the girl turned and catching step with the tall youngster, together they sought out the veteran.

"Yes, you may see him for a few moments," announced the surgeon on duty, "but I would not stay too long; the old fellow is pretty well tuckered out from the long journey he has just made. You will find him near that third air port, second tier."

"It's mighty glad I am to see the two of yez," said Dorlan, as Dick and Marie bent over him and touched his frail hand. "That old Saw-Bones says they're goin' to be retirin' this old man when they get me back to the States, but they've got another guess a-comin'. He don't know Old Mike Dorlan, or he never would be for makin' of such a wild suggestion. Who ever heard tell of retirin' one of us old 'leather-necks' fer a bit of a scratch, bedad?"

"Well, don't worry about it, Mike. The sea trip will do you a world of good, and you'll be back in harness in a few months' time."

"Oh, Old Mike's not worryin' at all, at all. The docther's the feller what's doing the worrying, and as ye say, Misther Dick, the sea trip is bound to put me on me feet, and after all it's good to be sailin' the seas ag'in under some of our own naval officers. Yes, it's glad I am to be seein' the uniform of our Navvy, for after all we M'rines and the Flat-feet are more like brothers, ye know, and while the

army's all right, they kinder come under the category of first cousins."

"Right you are, Mike," responded Dick, "and now we will have to be leaving you."

"But we will be down here often on the trip, Sergeant, if you would like to have us," said Marie.

"Indeed ye know that no medicine they kin be for givin' Old Mike will beat the tonic of yer voice and yer pretty face, Miss Marie," said Mike gallantly.

"Stop your flattery, Mike," said the girl.

"And it ain't no flattery, Miss. I'm meanin' every wurrd of it, as ye know, and if ye don't mind, will ye be so kind as to fix me piller just a bit, and then I'll be sleepin' fer a while," and the old fellow's eyes closed.

"Good-night, old pal," said Dick gently, as he patted the shoulder of the sick man while Marie deftly arranged the pillows as only a woman can, and then, just before turning away, she bent and kissed the seamed old face. "Good-night, old pal," she whispered; then the two sought the upper deck.

Seven days, and through the sparkling waters of New York harbor the ship was ploughing her way. Behind, a great fleet of gulls soared and screeched; ahead, a cloud of smoke hovered over the Mecca of the Great Republic. On every hand tugs and launches, steamships and steam vessels of every size

and description blazed the transport's way with mighty blasts of welcome.

Slower and slower the propellers churned the water, as nearer and nearer the wharf, where the transport was to dock, came to view. Now the watchers clinging to the rails, to the rigging, to the ladders, to every available bit of deck space, could see the mass of humanity lining the battery, and over on the opposite shore the wharf was black with welcoming throngs.

It seemed as though the tugs nosing the steel sides of the ship could never force that great floating structure into her allotted berth, but little by little these pigmies did their valiant work. Now faces became distinguishable. Finally some *blessé* from the deck called out in stentorian tones:

"Hello, Dad!" and turning to a fellow passenger, he proudly added: "See the old fellow over there with a crutch and carrying a little United States flag? Well, Bo, that's my old man, God bless him, and he's a vet too. I ain't got nothin' on him; he had a leg shot off in '63, same's I did in this old scrap. I say, Hello, hello, Dad!" and then the old eyes on the pier caught sight of the wildly waving crutch from the vessel's deck and with the tears rolling down his cheeks he proudly waved his little silken banner and cheered his hero son.

Now things seemed to move more quickly.

Everyone was shouting and laughing and crying in a breath, and before long the gangways were rigged and down them streamed a steady line of passengers to be swallowed up in that whirling, seething cauldron of men and women and children. And among the very first of those ashore was Dick Comstock and his sister Ursula and as their feet once more felt the beloved soil of their "own, their native land" beneath them, loving arms were thrown about the two as John Comstock and his wife met them and showered upon their son and daughter the endearments which for so long a time had been awaiting them.

Why say more, for "he who runs may read," and so we leave them where we first found them, with their parents, and close the adventures of Captain Dick Comstock, U. S. M. C.

The Stories in this Series are:

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